
National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory
2008



Columbus Plaza
National Mall & Memorial Parks - L'Enfant Plan
Reservations

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Inventory Summary

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

CLI General Information:

Purpose and Goals of the CLI

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI), a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the national park system, is one of the most ambitious initiatives of the National Park Service (NPS) Park Cultural Landscapes Program. The CLI is an evaluated inventory of all landscapes having historical significance that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources through a public planning process and in which the NPS has or plans to acquire any legal interest. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, condition, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, as well as other valuable information useful to park management. Cultural landscapes become approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into a national database. In addition, for landscapes that are not currently listed on the National Register and/or do not have adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer or the Keeper of the National Register.

The CLI, like the List of Classified Structures, assists the NPS in its efforts to fulfill the identification and management requirements associated with Section 110(a) of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Management Policies (2006), and Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. Since launching the CLI nationwide, the NPS, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), is required to report information that respond to NPS strategic plan accomplishments. Two GPRA goals are associated with the CLI: bringing certified cultural landscapes into good condition (Goal 1a7) and increasing the number of CLI records that have complete, accurate, and reliable information (Goal 1b2B).

Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is gathered from existing secondary sources found in park libraries and archives and at NPS regional offices and centers, as well as through on-site reconnaissance of the existing landscape. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in context of the site's overall significance. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features, and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's overall integrity and an assessment of the landscape's overall condition. The CLI also provides an illustrative site plan that indicates major features within the inventory unit. Unlike cultural landscape reports, the CLI does not provide management recommendations or treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape.

Inventory Unit Description:

Columbus Plaza, U.S. Reservation 334, is a semi-circular two level plaza located at the intersection of Massachusetts, Delaware, and Louisiana Avenues, and E and 1st Streets NE. The 940' long by 540' wide brick plaza is the forecourt of Union Station, the Washington, DC train station that includes two granite bowl fountains, three highly elaborate 112-foot flagpoles, and the stunning Christopher Columbus memorial fountain located in the center of the plaza.

Designed by Union Station architect Daniel H. Burnham, Columbus Plaza was constructed following the opening of the station in 1907. Burnham was a member of the Senate Park Commission, or as it is more commonly known, the McMillan Commission. Organized in 1901 under the leadership of Senator James McMillan, the Commission set out to improve the parks, public buildings, and public spaces in Washington, DC. Union Station became a major component of their planned improvements for the city. The Commission believed the city needed a train station fitting for the nation's capital—one that served as a grand entranceway to Washington and the nearby Capitol building. Burnham and Pierce Anderson, an architect in Burnham's firm, designed the station.

As the forecourt of Union Station, Columbus Plaza was considered part of the station's purpose as a grand entranceway to the city. It was also designed to provide a space where large crowds could gather to welcome visiting and returning dignitaries, or to hold public events. For many, the station and the plaza provided visitors with their first view of the Capitol and Burnham designed a space that was fitting for this purpose.

Burnham's design consisted of a two level plaza with three fountains—two granite bowl shaped fountains at opposite ends of the plaza surrounded by stone balustrades, and one large fountain at the center to serve as the focal point. Shallow stone steps adjacent to the fountain join the upper and lower levels. Three flagpoles inspired by flagpoles at the Piazza di San Marco in Venice flank the northern end of the plaza. Rostral columns and lightposts mounted on stone balustrades separate traffic traveling between the plaza and the station. Originally, eight circular and elliptical traffic islands separated the roads on the outside of the plaza. By about 1910, all of Burnham's features, except for the central fountain, were in place on the plaza.

In 1907 an Act of Congress authorized the erection of a memorial to Christopher Columbus in Washington. A commission was established to choose a site and to organize a competition for the design. In 1908 the plaza was selected as the location for the memorial and the following year sculptor Lorado Taft's design was chosen. On June 8, 1912 a parade and an unveiling celebrated the dedication of the Columbus fountain. Taft's sculpture occupied the space Burnham had designated for the central fountain and became the focal point of the plaza.

Placed on axis with the Capitol and the main entrance of Union Station, Lorado Taft's marble sculpture is a forty-five-foot tall pier supporting a statue of Columbus facing south towards the Capitol. Atop the pier four eagles, linked by garlands, surround a globe on which the continents are depicted. The Atlantic Ocean faces south. Allegorical figural statues representing Discovery and the Old and New Worlds are located on the east and west sides of the pier. A two-tier semicircular fountain projects at the front of the pier and pedestals support single lion sculptures on either side of the fountain. In 1914 lawn panels and brick paving, laid in a herringbone pattern, were added to the

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plaza.

Columbus Plaza was listed on the National Register in 1980 and in 2007 the listing was revised. Columbus Plaza is also included in the 1997 National Register listings for the L'Enfant Plan of Washington, DC and the 2007 Memorials in Washington, DC.

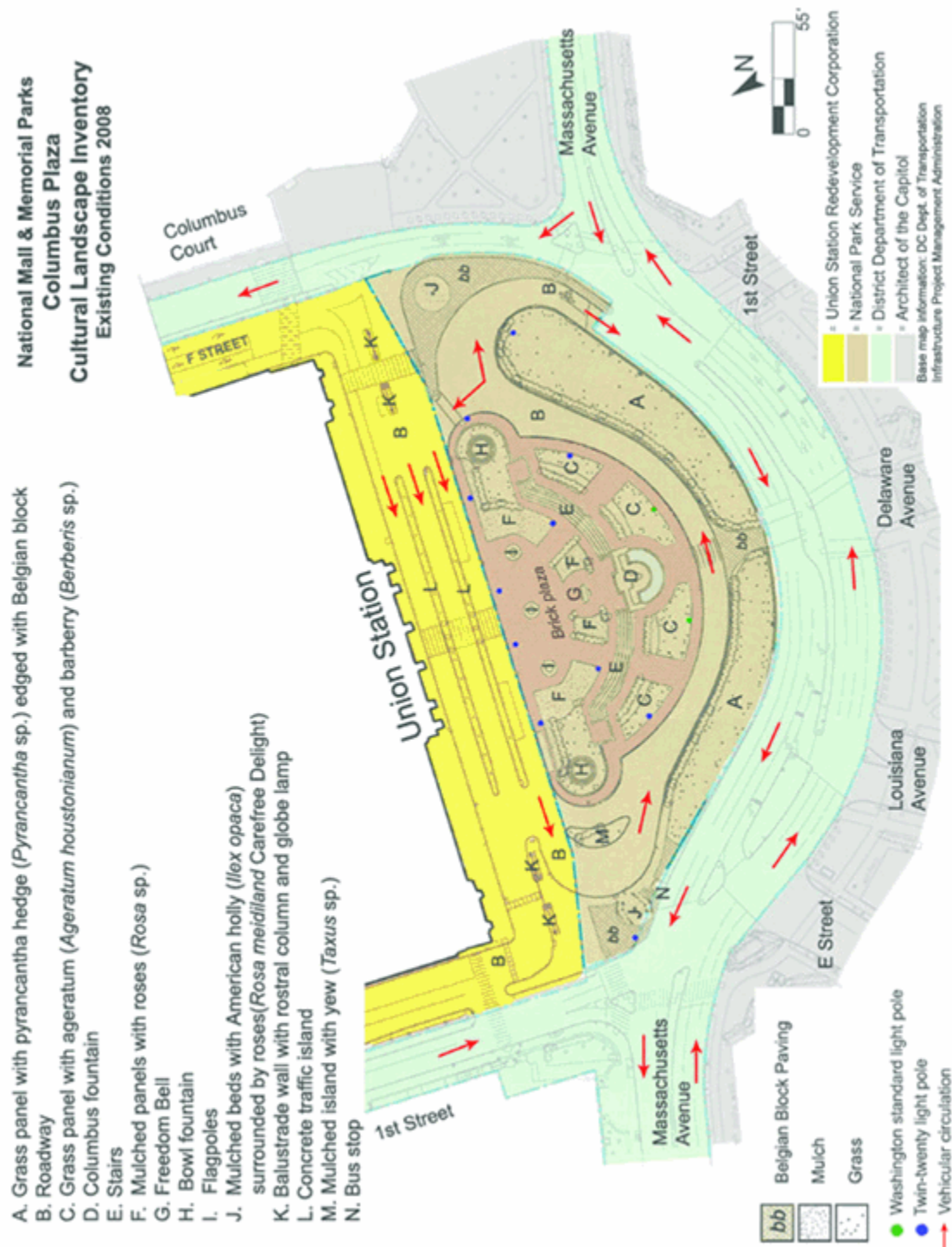
The National Register lists the period of significance for Columbus Plaza as 1903 to 1912. This CLI recommends expanding the listing to 1914 to include the addition of the lawn panels and brick paving. These features defined the spatial organization and circulation patterns of the plaza. Though plants were introduced to the lawn panels over the years, the shape of the panels has not been altered. The only exception to this is on the upper plaza where the Freedom Bell was installed in 1981. There, a lawn panel was divided in two to create a space for the bell. The panels, and the brick paving, have remained largely unchanged since the period of significance.

The traffic islands included in Burnham's design have been altered dramatically since the historic period. The original eight elliptical and circular islands were reconfigured or removed beginning in the mid-1920s to early 1930s. These features, along with the rostral columns and stone balustrades at the north of the plaza, are maintained by other agencies.

Columbus Plaza is in fair condition though there are some areas in need of repair that the National Park Service is addressing. In 2007 the water to the three fountains was turned off following the discovery of deteriorating pipes and a broken water main. The plaza is subject to heavy pedestrian traffic and this has worn the soil and created extensive social trails at the western edge of the plaza. In several areas the brick needs to be replaced.

The cultural landscape today evokes the historic period. Columbus Plaza displays the seven aspects that determine integrity as defined by the National Register of Historic Places: location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association through retention of landscape characteristics and features that contribute to its historic integrity. The landscape characteristics are circulation, spatial organization, topography, views and vistas, buildings and structures, vegetation, and small-scale features.

Site Plan



Site plan, Columbus Plaza 2008 (NCR CLP 2008).

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	Columbus Plaza
Property Level:	Landscape
CLI Identification Number:	600242
Parent Landscape:	600242

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	National Mall & Memorial Parks - L'Enfant Plan Reservations -NAMA
Park Organization Code:	340A
Subunit/District Name Alpha Code:	National Mall & Memorial Parks - L'Enfant Plan Reservations - NAMA
Park Administrative Unit:	National Capital Parks-Central

Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Complete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

This inventory was researched and written by Kay Fanning, Ph.D., Landscape Historian for the Cultural Landscapes Program of the National Capital Region, and Frances McMillen, Intern. Both primary and secondary sources were consulted. Historic photos were located in the archives of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and the National Capital Region Museum Resource Center (MRCE), while beautification files were found in the National Capital Region archives. Additional archival research was conducted in the National Mall and Memorial Parks Cultural Resource files, park land use files (LUCE), and the library collections of the Historic American Buildings Survey and the National Capital Region Cultural Landscapes Program.

This project was initiated in 2007 and completed in September 2008. Primary and secondary research sources are listed in the bibliography. Research and editorial assistance were provided by the following NCR staff: Darwina Neal, Chief, Cultural Resource Preservation Services; Maureen Joseph, Regional Historical Landscape Architect; Saylor Moss, Historical Landscape Architect; Emily Donaldson, Landscape Historian; and Martha Temkin, Regional Cultural Landscape Inventory Coordinator, with the Cultural Landscapes Program of the National Capital Region.

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence:	Yes
Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:	09/22/2008
National Register Concurrence:	Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination
Date of Concurrence Determination:	09/25/2008

National Register Concurrence Narrative:

The State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia concurred with the findings of the Columbus Plaza Cultural Landscape Inventory on September 25, 2008, in accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It should be noted that the "National Register Eligibility Concurrence Date" refers to this Section 110 Concurrence and not the date of listing on the National Register.

Concurrence Graphic Information:

Columbus Plaza
National Mall & Memorial Parks - L'Enfant Plan Reservations



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

September 19, 2008

Memorandum:

To: Cultural Landscape Inventory Coordinator, National Capital Region
From: *for* Superintendent, National Mall & Memorial Parks
Subject: Statement of Concurrence, Columbus Plaza U.S. Reservation 332 Cultural Landscape Inventory

I, Margaret O'Dell, Superintendent of National Mall & Memorial Parks, concur with the findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory for Columbus Plaza, including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Must Be Preserved and Maintained

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Cultural Landscape Inventory for Columbus Plaza, U.S. Reservation 332, is hereby approved and accepted, with the understanding that minor narrative updates provided by park staff will be incorporated.

Stephan Lorenz
for Superintendent, National Mall & Memorial Parks

9/22/08
Date

Concurrence memo signed by park superintendent 9/22/2008

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United States Department of the Interior

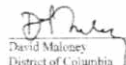
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20542

August 20, 2008

Memorandum

To: Cultural Landscapes Inventory Coordinator, National Capital Region
From: Acting State Historic Preservation Officer, District of Columbia
Subject: Statement of Concurrence, Columbus Plaza Cultural Landscapes Inventory

I, David Maloney, District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer, concur with the findings of the Columbus Plaza CLI as submitted on August 18, 2008.


David Maloney
District of Columbia
Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

9/25/08
Date

Concurrence Memo from DC SHPO 9/25/2008

Geographic Information & Location Map

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

Columbus Plaza, also known as U.S. Reservation 334, is surrounded by a network of city streets. On its north side it is bordered by Union Station, and to the west by Massachusetts Avenue and E Street NW. Delaware and Massachusetts avenues are to the south and east respectively, while First Street NE and E St NE lie to the southeast. The total area of Columbus Plaza is 940 feet long by 540 feet wide.

State and County:

State: DC

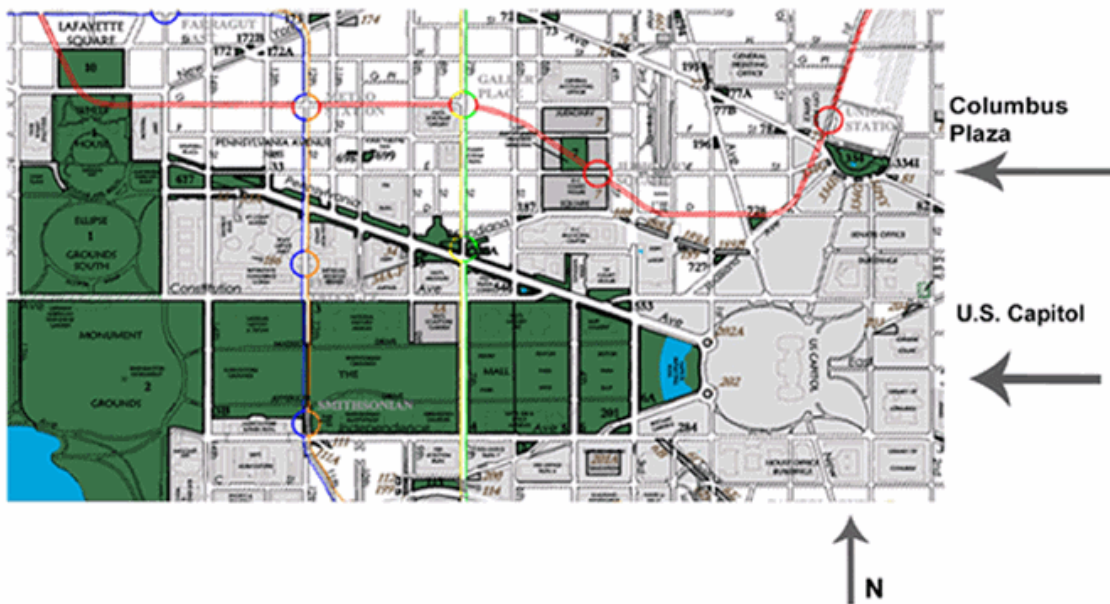
County: District of Columbia

Size (Acres): 3.60

Boundary UTMS:

Source:	USGS Map 1:24,000
Type of Point:	Point
Datum:	NAD 83
UTM Zone:	18
UTM Easting:	325,941
UTM Northing:	4,307,134
Boundary Datum Other:	http://nmviewogc.cr.usgs.gov/viewer.htm

Location Map:



Columbus Plaza is located at the intersection of Massachusetts, Louisiana, and Delaware avenues and E and First streets, NE. The plaza is located north of the United States Capitol (NCR CLP 2008).

Management Unit:	NAMA
Tract Numbers:	U.S. Reservation 334

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 09/22/2008

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

The management category is "Must be Preserved and Maintained," because, currently, much of the plaza's historic design is largely intact. In addition, Columbus Plaza is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as significant for art and community planning and development. The plaza was a significant feature of the McMillan Commission's 1902 plan for Washington. The Management Category Date is the date the nomination for Columbus Plaza was listed on the National Register.

The Management Category Date is the date the CLI was first approved by the park superintendent.

NPS Legal Interest:

Type of Interest:	Fee Simple
Type of Interest:	None - Other Federal Agency Owned
Other Agency or Organization:	Union Station Development Corporation
Type of Interest:	None - State Government Owned
Other Agency or Organization:	D.C. Department of Transportation
Type of Interest:	None - Other Federal Agency Owned
Other Agency or Organization:	Architect of the Capitol

Public Access:

Type of Access: Unrestricted

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Yes

Adjacent Lands Description:

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Columbus Plaza's two most important neighbors, the U.S. Capitol and Union Station, were instrumental in its development. Columbus Plaza was designed to contribute to Union Station's purpose as a gateway to the city and the nearby Capitol. The plaza was planned to be a place where visitors arriving at Union Station could stand and view the Capitol in the distance. In addition, the plaza was meant to provide a space for large crowds to gather and welcome visiting dignitaries or other notables arriving in Washington by train. The plaza's proximity and relationship to the Capitol and Union Station define its meaning. Since the period of significance, the area surrounding the plaza has gone through enormous changes. With the development of the Capitol grounds in the 1930s and the addition of the flagpoles featuring flags of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, circling the plaza in celebration of the bicentennial, the adjacent properties have furthered the role of the plaza and its surroundings as a gateway to the Capitol.

Though planned partly as a ceremonial space, the plaza's shape was largely defined by its relationship to the surrounding streets. Today it is part of a major traffic corridor, particularly for vehicles traveling east and west across the city on Massachusetts Avenue. The surrounding streets, primarily Louisiana and Delaware Avenues, link the plaza to the monumental core of Washington. Both 1st and E Streets link the plaza to commercial and governmental institutions in the vicinity.

At the northwest and northeast corners of the plaza stand paired granite balustrades that support rostral columns and lightposts, both designed by Daniel Burnham and included in the original design for the plaza. (A rostral column is a classical column, with the prows, or rostra, of ships projecting from the shaft. Rostral columns honor naval triumphs. See Curl 1999 and Harris 1977.) The columns and balustrades are no longer under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, but are significant because they comprise a major element of Burnham's design for the plaza. Each pair of balustrades frames the opening to the carriage entrances at either end of the Union Station arcade, and the two pairs together define the northern boundary of the plaza.

Though a recent addition, the 1992 Thurgood Marshall Federal Building at the northeast of the plaza, with its arches, massing and granite walls contributes to the Beaux Arts composition of the plaza.

National Register Information

Existing NRIS Information:

Other Names: Union Station Plaza
Primary Certification Date: 04/09/1980

Significance Criteria: C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values

Period of Significance:

Time Period: AD 1903 - 1912
Historic Context Theme: Expressing Cultural Values
Subtheme: Landscape Architecture
Facet: The City Beautiful Movement
Time Period: AD 1903 - 1912
Historic Context Theme: Expressing Cultural Values
Subtheme: Landscape Architecture
Facet: Urban Planning in the Twentieth Century

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category: Community Planning and Deve

Statement of Significance:

Columbus Plaza (U.S. Reservation 334) is a semi-circular plaza located at the intersection of Massachusetts, Delaware, and Louisiana avenues NE, and E and 1st streets NE. Columbus Plaza was listed on the National Register in 1980. The National Register listing was revised in October 2007. Columbus Plaza is also listed in the 1997 National Register Nomination for the L'Enfant Plan of Washington, DC and the 2007 Memorials in Washington, DC nomination. The 2007 revised National Register nomination for the plaza focused on the built structures, primarily the Columbus fountain, and does not adequately inventory the landscape of the site.

The National Register period of significance for Columbus Plaza is listed as 1903 to 1912. This CLI recommends that the period of significance be extended to 1914, the year the plaza was paved in brick and lawn panels were introduced.

The National Register lists Columbus Plaza as significant under Criterion C in the areas of Art and Community Planning and Development. This CLI argues that Columbus Plaza is also eligible under Criterion B for its association with Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912). Burnham and his partner John Wellborn Root are recognized for the design of some of the most innovative buildings of the nineteenth century, including Chicago's Monadnock (1884-1892), Rookery (1885-1888), and Reliance (1890-1895) buildings. Burnham is most often associated with Chicago for the many buildings he designed there and his role as chief organizer of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, but he designed buildings and city plans around the country and the world. After Root's death in 1891, Burnham went on to design Pennsylvania Station (1898-1903) in Pittsburgh, and the Fuller, or Flatiron, Building (1901-1903) in New York. During the first decade of the twentieth century, he designed department stores in Cleveland, Boston, London, and Toronto (Schaffer: 169). In 1914, Burnham's U.S. Post Office, to the west of Union Station, was completed.

Burnham's influence on, and work in, Washington is considerable for his role as a member of the McMillan Commission, his appointment as the first chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, and his design of Union Station (1903-1907). Burnham biographer Thomas Hines considers Union Station his most successful Neoclassical work. Because of Burnham's importance and impact on both national and local architecture, this CLI argues that the National Register listing should be expanded to include Criterion B for Burnham's association with Columbus Plaza.

Columbus Plaza was conceived of, and designed by, Daniel H. Burnham. As previously stated, Burnham was a member of the Senate Park Commission, more commonly known as the McMillan Commission. Organized in 1901 under the leadership of Senator James McMillan, the Commission set out to improve the parks, public buildings and public spaces in Washington. The Commission hoped to revive Pierre L'Enfant's plan for Washington and to inject European examples of urban design into the city. The Commission's members included Burnham, Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Architect Charles McKim. Charles Moore served as secretary. During the summer of 1901, Moore and the Commission members, except for Saint-Gaudens, traveled to Europe to study parks and public gathering spaces to guide them in their work on Washington. In 1902, the Commission published a report detailing their ideas and suggestions for the city.

Union Station became a major element in the Commission's plan for the presentation and improvement of Washington. For many, the station would be a visitors' first impression of the city. The McMillan Commission envisioned Union Station as the grand entranceway to the Capitol. Columbus Plaza was included in the Commission's report and was planned as a space where people could gaze upon the Capitol building, located just to the south. The plaza was, following European examples, also planned as a location where crowds could gather on special occasions or as a place to welcome visiting and returning dignitaries arriving at Union Station.

Columbus Plaza was constructed following the completion and opening of Union Station in October 1907. Burnham's design for the semicircular plaza included three fountains—two bowl shaped fountains at opposite ends of the plaza surrounded by stone balustrades, and one large fountain at the

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center serving as the focal point. The plaza is two levels joined by shallow steps connected to the large central fountain, which was installed as a memorial to Christopher Columbus. Three flagpoles inspired by flagpoles at the Piazza di San Marco in Venice flank the northern end of the plaza. Rostral columns and lightposts mounted on stone balustrades separate traffic traveling between the plaza and the station. Originally eight circular and elliptical traffic islands abutted the plaza. By about 1910, all of Burnham's features were in place on Columbus Plaza. The Columbus fountain, sculpted by Lorado Taft and installed in 1912, occupies the site Burnham designated for a central fountain.

Neither the 2007 National Register revision for Columbus Plaza, nor the 1997 L'Enfant Plan nomination, mention significant additions to the landscape of Columbus Plaza following the 1912 dedication of the memorial. In 1914, lawn panels, three on the upper plaza and four on the lower, were added to the plaza. These improvements followed the concerns raised by the D.C. Commissioners to the Commission of Fine Arts concerning the appearance of the plaza, which at the time consisted of the sculpture and fountains surrounded by bare earth. In addition to the inclusion of lawn panels, the plaza was paved in brick laid out in a herringbone pattern.

The introduction of the lawn panels and the paving created pathways and contributed to the overall visual and organizational program of the plaza. The lawn panels were decorative features, but they also defined the plaza's spatial organization. Prior to their installation, the plaza consisted of wide open spaces with the stairs acting as the only circulation features to guide people through the site. The inclusion of these features also enhanced the relationship of the plaza to the surrounding streets. Pathways between the panels lined up with the intersection of adjacent roads and Massachusetts Avenue, thus extending their axes. The herringbone brick paving added to the formality of the space.

These features, like the Columbus fountain and Burnham's design for the pedestrian sections of the plaza, have retained much of their integrity from the period of significance. Though roses and seasonal flowers were added to the lawn panels beginning in the 1960s, the panels have retained their original shape.

Chronology & Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape Type:

Designed

Other Use/Function

Plaza/Public Space (Square)-Other

Fountain

Pedestrian Circulation

Other Type of Use or Function

Both Current And Historic

Both Current And Historic

Both Current And Historic

Current and Historic Names:

Name	Type of Name
Columbus Plaza	Both Current And Historic
Union Station Plaza	Both Current And Historic
Columbus Fountain	Both Current And Historic

Chronology:

Year	Event	Annotation
AD 1903 - 1907	Built	Union Station completed.
AD 1908	Built	Columbus Plaza completed, except for the installation of Columbus fountain, the lawn panels, and the brick paving. Daniel Burnham
AD 1912	Built	Columbus Fountain was completed as the key feature of Columbus Plaza. Lorado Taft Daniel Burnham
AD 1914	Planted	Seven lawn panels are installed on the plaza.
	Paved	Columbus Plaza is paved in brick.
AD 1916	Land Transfer	Columbus Plaza was transferred from the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to the Chief of Engineers, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds.
AD 1925 - 1930	Built	The initial design of eight circular or elliptical traffic islands, based on Burnham's 1906 design, was implemented in these years. The islands had curbs, perimeter sidewalks, and streetlights, and were planted with grass.
AD 1929	Built	Under the Union Station Plaza Park Bill, authorized by the 70th Congress, Louisiana Avenue N.W. was built from E St. to Delaware Avenue. Also, streetcar lines were rerouted.

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AD 1932	Reconstructed	By 1932, the eight islands had been changed to five. They still had curbs, perimeter sidewalks, and streetlights, and were planted with grass.
AD 1936	Reconstructed	By 1936, the five islands had been changed to six through the addition of a small circular island at the west end. Also by this time, a narrow raised median had been built between Massachusetts Avenue and an inner recirculating road.
AD 1962	Removed	The three 110-foot cast-iron flagpoles in Columbus Plaza were removed.
AD 1965	Reconstructed	Three new 112-foot steel flagpoles were installed, using the original granite pedestals, bronze bases, and surmounting globes and eagles.
AD 1966	Planted	Magnolias and a ground cover of Santolina sp. were planted in the Columbus Plaza traffic islands.
AD 1969 - 1974	Reconstructed	The current north median between Massachusetts Avenue and the inner recirculating road appears to have been built in these years, replacing the narrow raised median. The line of circular and elliptical islands was replaced by a series of more linear islands.
AD 1965 - 1967	Planted	Roses are planted in the lawn panels on both the upper and lower sections of the plaza.
AD 1975	Built	By 1975, new Twin Twenties streetlights had been added along the north curb of Massachusetts Avenue and within Columbus Plaza.
	Built	By 1975, a new median had been built between Massachusetts Avenue and the inner recirculating roadway. Portions of this median and adjoining medians to the east were paved with Belgian block.
	Planted	By 1975, planting in the new median included an inner, or north, hedge of holly, and an outer, or south, border of a low-growing juniper. Seasonal flower beds were installed within the area enclosed by the hedge and border plantings.

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	Reconstructed	By 1975, single light fixtures around the plaza had been replaced with Twin Twenties, a lightpost designed for use in the District of Columbia by architect Henry Bacon.
AD 1976	Built	Public Law 94-326, 94th Cong., authorized the Secretary of the Interior to use the Capitol Grounds adjacent to the sidewalks around the perimeter of Columbus Plaza (outside edge of Mass. Ave.) to erect flags for each of the states and territories of the United States, 55 in all.
AD 1976 - 1978	Rehabilitated	The National Visitor Center opened in Union Station as a Bicentennial project. However, it failed to draw a sufficient number of visitors, and was closed in 1978 due to major structural issues.
AD 1981	Built	The American Legion Freedom Bell, dedicated to the children of the U.S., was installed directly behind (north of) the Columbus Fountain, under Public Law 94-483 (passed in 1976). The center portion of a rose bed was paved for this feature.
AD 1982	Land Transfer	Land including Reservations 334C, 334E, and 334H - the traffic islands around Columbus Plaza, which had been consolidated into a median by 1974 - were transferred from the National Park Service to the D.C. government.
AD 1988	Rehabilitated	Union Station was reopened after an extensive rehabilitation by the Union Station Development Corporation.
AD 2003	Built	A 54th flagpole representing the District of Columbia was added to the group bordering the south side of Massachusetts Avenue, just outside of Columbus Plaza.

Physical History:

1753 – 1900, GORDON'S MEADOW, SWAMPOODLE, AND THE RAILROAD

The area surrounding present day Columbus Plaza and Union Station was slow to develop. George Gordon patented the land in 1753, and the area was known as "Gordon's Meadow," before its transfer to the federal government in order to found Washington. (HABS DC-694:2, reference to Priscilla W. McNeil. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City," *Washington History* 3, Spring/Summer 1991).

The 1791 L'Enfant Plan shows Massachusetts Avenue bending sharply to the south at the point it intersects with Delaware Avenue at a "large rectangular open space" at the site of Columbus Plaza. In the 1792 Ellicott version of the plan, Massachusetts Avenue has been straightened, and meets Delaware Avenue at a "small triangle". (HABS No. DC-694:2; see Reys 1991, L'Enfant Plan, and Folio 10, pp. 38-39, "Plan of the City of Washington in the Territory of Columbia," engraving by Thackara and Vallance, Philadelphia, 1792)

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the area north of the U.S. Capitol was a region of woods, brushy fields, and perhaps a farm or two; there were few roads or houses. The Tiber Creek followed the line of present-day 1st Street, N.E., and a tributary of the Tiber ran through what would become the site of Columbus Plaza and Union Station. An 1844 painting by William McLeod, "A Glimpse of the Capitol," shows that structure from a vantage point located somewhere near the study area. In the foreground, cows graze in a hilly meadow; beyond are a few small wooden structures. The Capitol rises in the background, surrounded by a complement of imposing brick buildings.

Settlement of the neighborhood began about 1850, predominantly by Irish immigrants, who occupied a shantytown of two- and three-story wood-frame rowhouses. It became known as "Swampoodle," most likely because of the marshy and flood-prone conditions of the land along the Tiber. Land values were low.

Swampoodle's boundaries have been variously defined. Its west boundary has usually been set at North Capitol Street and its east boundary at 1st or 2nd Streets, NE, but its northern border has ranged from G to I or K Streets, and its south boundary has varied from Massachusetts Avenue to G Street. (Lane, WP, 1/1/1922:44; "Swampoodle Mayor," WP 2/3/1951:B2; Croggon, *Evening Star* 7/19/1909; Old City Capitol Hill website, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swampoodle>, 8/20/07)

In 1857 and 1861, Surveyor Albert Boschke published two maps based on the three-year survey he undertook from 1856-59. The 1861 Boschke map, depicting all of the District of Columbia, shows an empty triangular intersection crossed by the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad tracks at the site of Columbus Plaza. The blocks between Columbus Plaza and the Capitol were relatively empty, though several dozen structures are represented in the two blocks immediately north of the Capitol, between Delaware Avenue and 1st Street, N.E. Fewer structures are shown in the blocks to the north. ("Topographical Map of the District of Columbia, Surveyed in the Years 1856-59," Albert Boschke, 1861, in Reys 1991:139)

In North America, British novelist Anthony Trollope recounted his visit to Washington in the winter of 1861-1862, and described the conditions he found along Massachusetts Avenue:

“Massachusetts Avenue runs the whole length of the city, and is inserted on the maps as a full-blown street, about four miles in length. Go there, and you will find yourself not only out of town, away among the fields, but you will find yourself beyond the fields, in an uncultivated, undrained wilderness. Tucking your trousers up to your knees you will wade through the bogs, you will lose yourself among the rude hillocks, you will be out of the reach of humanity.” (North America, p. 305, quoted in Reys 1991:164)

Swampoodle became infamous for gangs, saloons, and criminal activity. Late-nineteenth century reports from the Washington Post provide numerous accounts of brawls and public drunkenness, as well as a highly-colored story of a police raid on a Chinese gambling house and opium den.

By mid-century, growth began to occur along North Capitol Street. St. Aloysius Church was built fronting North Capitol Street north of I Street, N.W. in 1857-59. During the Civil War, the federal government tried to commandeer the church for hospital use, but agreed to use the square immediately to its north instead, where they built St. Aloysius Hospital, with wards for 2000 patients (Croggon 7/19/1909). In 1871 Gonzaga College High School moved from the 900 block of F Street to a former orphanage building on I Street next to the church. (<http://gonzaga.org/html/history.html>, 4/22/08, “History of Gonzaga College High School”). The Government Printing Office, located on North Capitol Street between G and H Streets, N.W., began operation in 1861. The present enormous Renaissance Revival building was constructed between 1899 and 1904. Its annex to the north was built from 1938 to 1940.

From 1886 to 1889, the Swampoodle Grounds, accommodating up to 6000 spectators, was the home of the Washington Nationals baseball team. The right field and infield now lie under Union Station, and the left field under the Post Office. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swampoodle_Grounds, Aug. 20, 2007)

By the turn of the twentieth century, Swampoodle had developed into a neighborhood of “brick rowhouses, warehouses, stables and a coal yard,” working men, and small factories (Traceries 2002:2). The neighborhood was demolished for construction of Union Station and its attendant warehouses and other structures. Four city squares (678, 679, 720, and 721) were cleared. Clearing continued through August 1904, after construction on the station was underway. (Traceries 2002:2, cites 1903 Baist map vol. 2 pl. 13) The site of the future Columbus Plaza was occupied by passenger and freight train tracks and buildings belonging to the B&O Railroad, along with some residences and businesses. (Olszewski: 47)

The Railroad

In 1835 rail service began in Washington when the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad laid tracks into the city (HABS DC-694). The railroad first used a converted house located at Pennsylvania Avenue and 2nd Street, N.W. as a terminal. In 1852, the railroad built a new station and terminal east of New Jersey Avenue, between C and D Streets, N.W., moving its tracks west of New Jersey Avenue (Reys 1991: 118-119; see Boschke 1861 map). The new

station, designed by B&O Railroad architects Niernsee and Neilson in the Italianate, or bracketed, style, was dominated by a prominent tower housing a bell and clock. Between E and H Streets, the tracks followed the Delaware Avenue right-of-way from the 1860s (HABS DC-699). This structure was enlarged in 1888-92 and then razed in 1907. Historian James Goode wrote of the impact of the railroad on the city:

“The railroad caused innumerable problems for city authorities during the nineteenth century. Because the trains had to be routed down busy commercial streets, accidents frequently occurred involving carriages and pedestrians. More than thirty pedestrians per year were killed or maimed as a result of rail accidents in downtown Washington. Not until 1870 was the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad authorized by Congress to use the Long Bridge (once adjacent to the present 14th Street Bridge) to cross the Potomac River into Virginia. Before that date all passengers bound for the South had to transfer to omnibuses for connections to the railroad in Alexandria, Virginia. In addition, an enormous network of sidetracks, switches, coal dumps, warehouses, lumber yards, and repair sheds crowded the area adjacent to and north of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Station . . .” (Goode 2003:452)

Other rail lines crossed the Mall, intruding on the National Capital’s primary public space. Chartered in 1854, the Alexandria and Washington Railroad traveled north from Alexandria to the B&O station, passing across the Mall at the very foot of Capitol Hill in 1863 (Belanger: 6; Green: 195). Only a few years later, Congress gave the Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad, a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad, use of a spot on the Mall. The B&P, which had been operating out of a site on Virginia Avenue between Sixth and Seventh Streets, initially constructed a temporary frame depot located where the National Gallery of Art is today. Passenger service began on July 2, 1872, the same day the new Center Market opened across Pennsylvania Avenue. (Goode 1979: 413; Olszewski 16-17; Belanger: 13) Construction of a new, permanent, brick depot in a Victorian Gothic mode began the following July, and it was most likely in use by late December 1874. It was in the main lobby of the station that President Garfield was shot in 1881. (Goode 1979: 414)

The new train station and the opening of the Center Market during the 1870s were two, among several, improvements in the city during the 1870s. The city’s Board of Public Works completed multiple projects for bettering the city, included planting trees, installing sewers, and re-grading, paving, and illuminating streets. (Belanger: 7; Green: 345-346) An article on the “New Washington” in Harper’s magazine exulted on the changes down by the Capitol: “Where the old creek yawned through the heart of the old commercial city a noble Mall, grand market, and depots were revealed. . .” (Harper’s, Feb. 1875; quoted in Belanger: 15) But as Thomas Hines points out, even with these improvements and developments in the city, the Mall “had become, among other things, a common pasture, a lumber yard, and the railroad center of the city, dissected and cluttered by railroad tacks and depot buildings.” (Hines: 140)

The presence of the B&P railroad on the Mall was antithetical to the pastoral nature of the 1851 landscape design by Andrew Jackson Downing, partially implemented following his death in 1852, and damaging to the open views intrinsic to the L’Enfant conception of the Mall. The train shed, 130 feet by 510 feet, extended almost halfway across the Mall. Mounds of coal were piled by the tracks where empty rail cars idled or parked. The multiple tracks

feeding the busy station crossed the Mall on grade, causing a noisy, smelly, dangerous presence that spelled progress and prosperity to some Washingtonians, but angered many others for years, as did the federal underwriting of this private enterprise. (Belanger: 15)

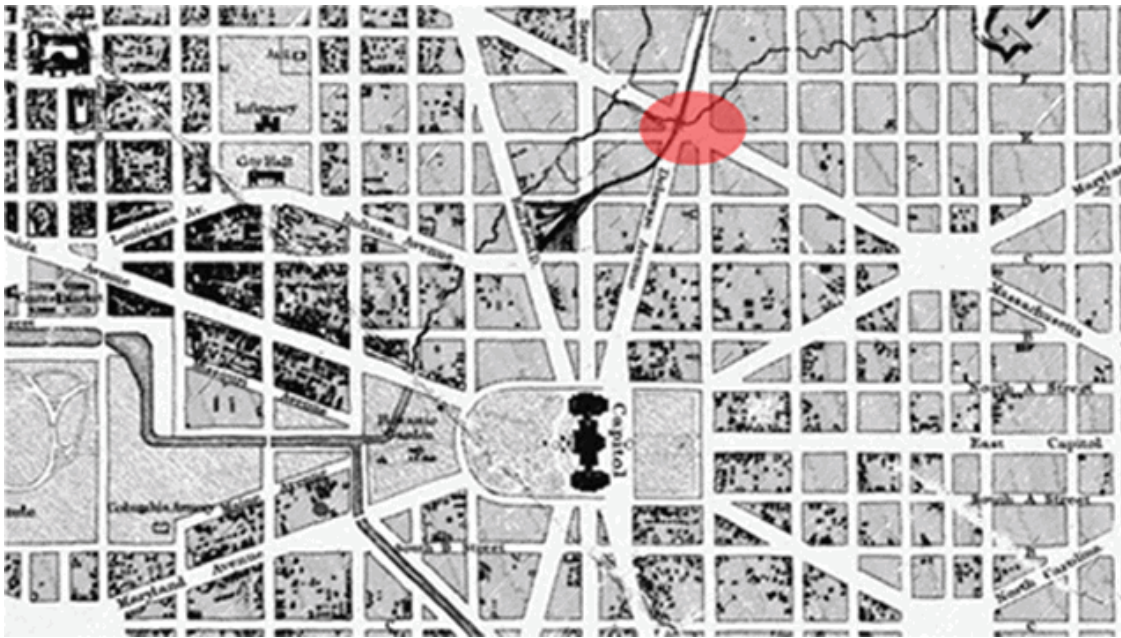
Attempts were made in the 1880s to hide the railroad from view by concealing the tracks on and near the Mall. In 1883, B&P constructed an iron bridge over the tracks on Sixth Street, and in 1886 the railroad, along with the Army Corps of Engineers, “shaped a 16,000-cubic-foot earthen mound” near the station to conceal its presence from the Mall. The following year they suggested, but never built, a stone, vine-covered wall along Sixth Street to again screen the tracks from the Mall. (Belanger: 19)

At the turn of the century, the railroad tracks at the foot of the Capitol threatened to be a long term presence. In February 1901, Congress granted the B&P “a larger and more central piece of the Mall” (Hines: 148) on which to build a new station, and the B&O permission to build “in the area of Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues and C Street” (Olszewski: 26). For many years the idea of a union station—one single terminal that each of the railroad companies would use—had been discussed in Congress. In 1872, when Congress passed the bill (H.R. 2057) allowing the B&P the site at Sixth and B Streets, then Congressman James Garfield proposed the consolidation as part of the legislation, but it was not ultimately included in the bill. (Belanger: 26). Due to their competing business interests, neither of the rail companies had previously been interested in the idea.

When the McMillan Commission began their extensive re-planning of the Mall area, the B&P Railroad was immediately identified as the major impediment to fulfilling their vision. Later, in their published report, the Commission stated, “an adequate treatment of the park system depends upon the exclusion of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad from the public grounds, so as to allow for which the Mall was originally intended.” (Moore: 14)



William McLeod, 'A Glimpse of the Capitol,' 1844, reveals the rural and undeveloped area north of the U.S. Capitol (McLeod 1844).



The 1861 Boschke Map, based on surveys of Washington conducted between 1856 and 1859, reveals the sparsely populated intersection of Delaware and Massachusetts avenues, where Union Station and Columbus Plaza would later be located (Boschke 1861).

1901-1907, MCMILLAN COMMISSION, MCMILLAN PLAN AND UNION STATION

In the 1890s, as Washington's centennial approached, both private citizens and the government developed plans for the improvement of the central city. These plans were of varying degrees of sophistication, but they inspired architect Glenn Brown, appointed Secretary of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1898, to arrange for the AIA to devote its annual meeting in December 1900 to discussing Washington. The annual meeting focused on the city's redesign, particularly the development of parks and location of future public buildings (Hines: 142). The meeting included papers and schemes for the city's improvement by well-known architects who presented on the "unified and artistic development of the city" (as quoted by Belanger: 25). Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. gave a talk that was "one of the first attempts by an American designer to define the role of landscape architecture in the planning and improvement of cities." (Reps 1966:89; Olmsted, "Landscape in Connection with Public Buildings in Washington," in Glenn Brown, Papers, pp. 25+.) The meeting resulted in the formation of an AIA committee on legislation, which lobbied Congress to undertake serious examination of the city's design problems. With the aid of Senator James McMillan, chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, the AIA committee helped bring about the formation of the Senate Park Commission, commonly known as the McMillan Commission, in 1901. (Reps 1967: Chapter 3. For more details on the workings of the McMillan Commission, see Moore, Senate Park Report, 1902; Reps, Monumental Washington; Gutheim, Worthy of the Nation; and The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991, ed. Longstreth.)

A joint resolution introduced by McMillan in December 1900 had proposed the creation of a committee to study the arrangement of public buildings in Washington and the development of a comprehensive park system. This was defeated, apparently because of the opposition of the powerful, conservative Republican Speaker of the House, Joseph "Uncle Joe" Cannon of Illinois, a vehement opponent of using federal funds for the aesthetic improvement of the District of Columbia. Cannon would also oppose construction of Columbus Plaza.

McMillan sidestepped this obstacle by having a Senate Resolution passed in executive session in March 1901, which mandated the use of Senate funds for a redesign of the park system only, though McMillan clearly intended to include public architecture. (Reps 1967:92-93) Through this, McMillan succeeded in establishing the Senate Park Commission, but his political maneuvering, particularly the bypassing of House approval, led to continuing problems in getting specific portions of the plan enacted.

Congress appointed the Senate Park Commission that month. Its members included architects Daniel H. Burnham and Charles Follen McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. All the commission members had been involved in the creation of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a landmark in City Beautiful design and a major influence on American public architecture for much of the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were assisted by Charles Moore, McMillan's secretary and Clerk of the District Committee.

The term "City Beautiful" refers to a broad set of progressive beliefs and practices espoused during the turn of the century concerning ways to improve urban communities – from the creation of new municipal centers to the installation of neighborhood playgrounds. City Beautiful architectural design relied on the principles taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which was attended by many of the era's leading architects and wielded enormous influence. Beaux-Arts architecture focused on the planning of monumental civic buildings that embodied hierarchical and symmetrical arrangements of spaces and structures, using dominant axes and subordinate cross-axes. The buildings were commonly designed in classical styles, and often employed all the traditional visual arts: architecture, sculpture, and painting. Across the nation, cities adopted City Beautiful principles and designs with the construction of Beaux-Arts style civic centers, such as San Francisco's City Hall (1913-1915) and Boston's Public Library (1898), as well as public buildings, museums, and railroad stations.

The McMillan Commission applied City Beautiful precepts to the redesign of Washington's central core. As laid out in a report published in 1902, their plan attempted to recapture the fundamental principles of the original L'Enfant plan for the Mall; to establish and maintain design standards for this area; and to extend the District of Columbia's park system to protect views, natural and scenic features, and the city water supply.

The Commission began meeting in April 1901. That summer, the members (with the exception of Saint-Gaudens) took a seven week journey to Virginia and then Europe for the intensive study of the greatest classical urban ensembles of the Western tradition, the American estates and cities that would have been familiar to Washington and Jefferson, and

the European sources on which L'Enfant may have based his plan. (Reps 1967:94-98; Streatfield 1991:123) Among the European cities they visited were Paris, Rome, London, Vienna, and Frankfurt.

On their return, the commission members set to work on their plans for Washington in their respective cities. To promote their work, the members arranged an extensive publicity campaign and sought the backing of important political figures. Members of the Commission, as well as Glenn Brown, gave interviews and lantern-slide lectures on the plan. Burnham wrote an article for Century magazine in which he connected the improvement of Washington's public landscapes with other reform movements of the day. They prepared large format color renderings and three enormous models, which were exhibited in Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art. Black and white versions of the renderings were published in the commission's report, as well as in major magazines. The exhibit opened on January 15, 1902, the same day Senator McMillan presented the plan to Congress. President Roosevelt, crucial members of Congress who served on Washington committees, and the commissioners of the District of Columbia, all attended the event. (Reps 1967:100-108; Hines:155; Shaffer:100; Peterson:32-33)

One critical development prior to the publication of the commission's report and the exhibit at the Corcoran, was securing the removal of the B&P Railroad and the construction of a union station, shared with the B&O Railroad, at the intersection of Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues, N.W. (Reps 1967: 97-100) McMillan initially had supported rebuilding the B&P station on the Mall. Prior to the formation of the Senate Park Commission, McMillan introduced a bill (S. 1929) to require B&P to raise or lower their tracks so as not to cross the Mall at grade, and to build a new, larger station on the Mall site. McMillan thought that because the public was used to the station's place on the Mall, people would be inconvenienced by its relocation. (Belanger: 24)

During the Commission's European trip the summer of 1901, Daniel Burnham met with Alexander Cassatt, the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad to discuss relocating the B&P station. Burnham was already acquainted with Cassatt and familiar with the workings of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The Pennsylvania Station in Pittsburgh (1898-1901) he designed for the company had recently been completed. During their London meeting, Cassatt informed Burnham of the railroad's agreement to move the station off the Mall—a decision that had long been credited to Burnham's powers of persuasion—but was really the result of practical business considerations and decisions within the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. (Wright: 70-79) The company was also agreeable to a single station in the city because the Pennsylvania Railroad had been acquiring a financial foothold within the B&O strong enough to appoint officers within the company. With both railroads under the control of one company, two stations would be impractical. Cassatt agreed to move to the B&O site at Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues if Congress would subsidize the costs of construction. In February 1903 Congress passed legislation providing \$1.5 million to build the station and to tunnel the tracks for southbound trains so as to remove them from the Mall (Belanger: 26).

Daniel Burnham & Pierce Anderson

Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912) is considered to be the leader of the City Beautiful movement

and Union Station is thought by some to be his most successful Neoclassical building. (Hines 1988:99) Burnham received his architectural training through apprenticeship in a Chicago firm, where he met John Wellborn Root. Burnham and Root established a partnership in 1873 that lasted until Root's death in 1891, after which the firm became Daniel H. Burnham & Co. (and still survives today as Graham, Anderson, Probst & White). Burnham tended to handle the business end, while Root became known for his creative panache, but Burnham contributed to the design of structures, too, notably the famous Monadnock (1884-1892). Typically, it was Burnham who laid out the plans of buildings and made many of the early sketches. (Schaffer: 21-22)

In the 1880s, Burnham and Root became highly successful in the design of high-rise Chicago office buildings, distinguished by their use of light courts and the dedication of the first two floors to prime commercial space. The firm produced many other types of buildings in Chicago and other Midwestern cities, among them hotels, apartments, and banks. (Schaffer: 23-24) The firm's Reliance Building (1890-1895) is an architectural landmark for its great use of glass years before the prevalence of the material in twentieth century office buildings. (Hines 1988:99) Burnham was chosen to head the organization of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, responsible for the "supervision of design, construction, engineering, landscaping, and maintenance," among dozens of other tasks. (Schaffer: 63) The exceptional managerial ability Burnham brought to this enormous project led to his appointment to the McMillan Commission, and his later roles in spearheading urban plans for such cities as Chicago, San Francisco, Canberra, Australia, and, with the assistance of Pierce Anderson, Baguio and Manila, in the Philippines. Concurrent with McMillan plan, Burnham designed the Fuller Building, commonly known as the Flatiron Building, in New York. When the Commission of Fine Arts was established in 1910, Burnham was appointed chairman.

Architect Pierce Anderson (1870-1924) of Burnham's office served as the project engineer and supervisor at Union Station. After graduating from Harvard in 1892, Anderson received a degree in electrical engineering from Johns Hopkins, and then attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, at Burnham's suggestion, to study architecture. ("Next to Capitol in Size," WP 11/8/03:2; Shaffer: 214, n. 13) At the time of the Union Station commission, Anderson had been with Burnham & Co. for three years, during which time he became the firm's chief designer. Following his work on Union Station, he went on to design Chicago's Union Station, among many other projects, but his work on Washington's Union Station was considered to be his greatest architectural achievement. (Withey: 20; Wright: 223) After Burnham died in 1912, Anderson replaced him on the Commission of Fine Arts, serving alongside the two surviving members of the McMillan Commission, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

Union Station

Despite his major role in the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 with its Neoclassical architecture, Burnham made his first trip to Europe, where he saw the sources of the fair's design, in 1896. (Schaffer: 95) This trip redefined Burnham's approach to architecture and influenced his later work. "From the time they headed home in April 1896, until his death some sixteen years later, Burnham sought to bring to American soil much of the power, grandeur, mystery, and monumentality he saw and imbibed in his Old World travels." (Hines:

137) When Burnham traveled to Europe with the Commission, he studied prominent rail stations, including, at the suggestion of Alexander Cassatt, the rail terminal in Frankfurt, Germany, which was considered at the time to be the finest station in the world. (Reps 1967: 98; Hines 147) Union Station's Neoclassical design was clearly influenced by Burnham's travels in Europe.

Burnham's involvement with Union Station began prior to his appointment to the McMillan Commission. When he learned the Pennsylvania Railroad was building a new station in Washington, he prepared preliminary sketches and met with the officials at the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1900 and early 1901 to discuss the project with the hopes of being asked to design the new building. (Barsoum: 2; Shaffer: 213, n. 12; 214, n. 16; Wright: 101)

Though Burnham's drawings for Washington's Union Station were conceived and published before the McMillan Report, the station came to be seen as a major piece of the Commission's plan for Washington. (Barsoum: 2) The McMillan Commission's report noted that the three most important features of a capital city are "the halls of legislation, the executive buildings, and the vestibule" (Moore: 30). Though operated by a private enterprise, the station, as the major entryway into the Capital, should be similar in form and grandeur to the public buildings in the city. "This great station forms the grand gateway to the Capital, through which every one who comes to or goes from Washington must pass; as there is no railroad entering the city that will not use the station, it becomes the vestibule of the capital. This being the fact, the importance of this station is greater than that of any other one in any city in the world..." (Moore: 30)

Burnham and Anderson designed a building that was fitting to its purpose and setting. Given that there were few grand American railway stations to choose from as models, Anderson and Burnham's appreciation and knowledge of classical forms, as well as the desire to connect the building with the other Neoclassical structures in the city, particularly the Capitol, it is not surprising that the architects turned to the past. (Wright: 103)

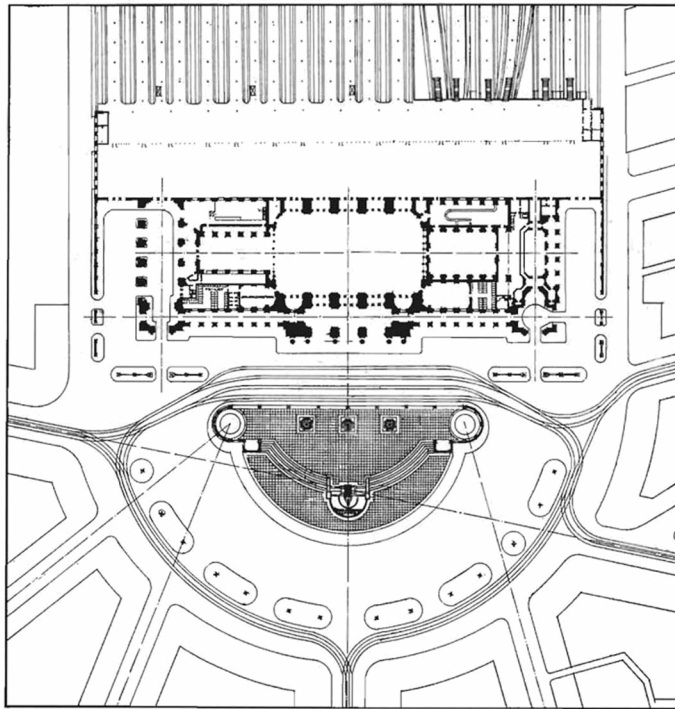
In a 1903 interview with the Washington Post, Burnham was quoted extensively about the station's design, "In designing this station we have borne in mind the fact that it is to be the entrance to the Capital of the nation, and have done everything in our power to make it in keeping with that idea, trying to impart to the structure the dignity and beauty it should possess. It will be, I think, the most monumental building in the city, with the exception, of course, of the Capitol itself." ("Next to Capitol in Size," WP 11/8/03:2)

The floor plan of the station was designed by Anderson and based on the Baths of Diocletian (Wright: 106). The three major archways on the exterior of the station are based on triumphal and memorial arches built in ancient Rome. Built to signify victory in battle or to memorialize an individual, these arches were grand entranceways to cities and were intended to be so in Washington. The three major arches signifying the main entrance of the station, with smaller arches flanking its wings, are similar to the Arch of Constantine and the Arch of Septimus Severus (Harris: 350). As stated in the McMillan Commission Report, "the design goes back to pure Roman motives, the central portion being derived from the triumphal arch of Constantine and the wings being brought into subordination to it." (Moore: 30) Burnham, in

the November 1903 Washington Post interview, spoke of the design's links to the past. "The ancients, you know, had the custom of making their gateways especially handsome and imposing, on the theory that the newcomer would be favorably impressed with the city's beauty by seeing something beautiful upon his arrival." ("Next to Capitol in Size," WP 11/8/03:2) The arches also served as framing devices for the Capitol building. Passengers arriving in the city had their first view of the building and the city upon exiting the station.

Construction began in October 1903 (Olszewski: 46) and the station officially opened on October 27, 1907 with 4,000 passengers and spectators cheering and yelling as the first train arrived just before 7AM. Throughout the day, an estimated 25,000 people visited the new station. Constructed of granite from Bethel, Vermont, the overall building is 626 feet, 10 inches long, and the three archways at the center are nearly fifty feet high (Olszewski: 85). The station soon served the Penn lines, the Southern Railway, the Seaboard Air Line, the Atlantic Coast Line, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, and the City and Suburban Railway. Streetcar tracks for the Washington Railway and Electric Company and the Capital Traction Company were in operation by June of the following year. ("Union Station Opened," WP 10/28/1907:3, "Car Lines to Station," WP 12/6/1907:16, "Cars to Station in Ten Days," WP 6/19/1908:11).

A November editorial in the Washington Post praised the station and the removal of the railroad from the Mall. "This day marks the passing of the belching locomotive from the Mall. May it be forever! One of the most characteristic features of American life was shown in the desecration and spoliation of the Mall by the never-ceasing shuttling of belching and shrieking engines through it, turning its pastoral beauty into a pandemonium...unless the world moves backward, there will be no resumption of railroad traffic on the Mall." ("The New Station at Last," WP 11/17/1907)



Washington, D. C. THE UNION STATION—PLAN. D. H. Burnham & Co., Architects.

Daniel H. Burnham's plan for the plaza (Mechlin 1908).



Union Station following completion and prior to construction of the plaza (Courtesy of the Library of Congress).

1908 – 1914, COLUMBUS PLAZA

Following completion of the station, attention turned to the plaza. The concept for the plaza originated with Daniel Burnham and had been an element of the station's design discussed by the McMillan Commission and included in their report (Shaffer: 213, n. 16). Burnham felt a plaza was necessary because "most major European terminals included a plaza in front to leave room for events such as greeting an important visitor." (Wright: 85) To Burnham the station and the plaza were as important as the Mall itself and the improvement of the city. (Peterson: 23) Burnham studied European examples for inspiration. In 1901, following their meeting in London, Burnham and Alexander Cassatt traveled to Paris where they visited the Place de la Concorde to see if it would serve as a model, or at least provide instruction, for the design of Union Station's plaza. (Wright: 61, 85)

Burnham's early drawings conceived of the plaza in several forms. One design reveals a relatively small, formal space slightly sunken below street level. Four staircases lead down to an open court surrounded by balustrades and five small archways that compliment the grand arches of the station. The area immediately surrounding the plaza is open and free of buildings or additional structures. Another early sketch shows a paved area flanking the center of the station, again with stone balustrades and three fountains—two at the outer edges and one at the center of the plaza with a spray of water jutting towards the sky. (Shaffer: 107) Outside the carriage entrances on the far northeast and northwest ends of the station, pairs of enormous columns stand at the end of balustrades on either side of the entrances. These two designs are modest compared to the grandness of one of his additional schemes. Reminiscent of St. Peter's and the Piazza di Termini in Rome, Burnham conceived of an enormous semicircular plaza enclosed by colonnaded structures. A fountain in the center of the plaza is set within a semicircular pedestrian area that is very similar to the final form of Columbus Plaza. Other features of this design that are present in the ultimate configuration of the plaza include balustrades surrounding two fountains at the outermost rounded edges of the pedestrian section and traffic islands forming a broken ring between the central fountain and the large colonnades that enclose the space. This design, like the grand archways at Union Station, served as a framing device for both the plaza and the Capitol. At the center of the colonnades, Delaware Avenue breaks through and provides a striking view of the Capitol in the distance. This plan was ultimately abandoned because it interfered with the perspective of the Capitol; if executed, it would have clearly competed with the Capitol in terms of scale and program. (Olszewski: A17)

The sunken plaza design was published in the McMillan Commission's report along with the description, "In front of the union station the Commission proposed a public plaza to be six hundred feet in width by twelve hundred feet in length, ornamented with fitting terrace, basins, and fountains. Facing this plaza, and a hundred feet north of the line of Massachusetts Avenue will be the marble façade of the station, seven hundred and sixty feet long." (Moore: 31) Included with the description of the plaza and its details was a photograph of a water feature from Vaux-le-Vicomte.

The inclusion of fountains was in keeping with the suggestions of the McMillan Plan. An important theme of the plan was the presence of fountains throughout public areas. The

published report is filled with images of water features from the committee's 1901 trip to Europe. Influenced by Rome, where municipal fountains formed centerpieces of urban plazas, the commission believed these features would give Washington the "status" of European cities, and reflected L'Enfant's desire for water features. (Barsoum: 2) Charles Moore later wrote of the McMillan Commission's decision to include fountains. "It was determined that the fountain and not the man on horseback is the proper ornament for Washington and that the heat of our capital requires that the city should be filled with running water...as in Rome." (Hines: 148)

The fountains were part of the visual program—they, like the triumphal arches of the station, contributed to the monumental nature of the site. Burnham's design worked within the confines, and made use of, the streets approaching the station. This design was in keeping with L'Enfant's plan for the city, since the station and the plaza were a focal point with avenues and streets radiating out from the site.

Burnham firmly believed in the necessity of the plaza, even if its construction was an enormous undertaking. "The Government is to fill and finish the Grand Court in front of the depot. Of course, this will cost some money, but it is for the adornment of the city, to produce a vestibule in keeping with the Capitol, and is as important as the work around the Monument in the Mall." (Reps 1967: 100) If there was ever any doubt as to the necessity of the plaza, it was not evident in the Commission's report. Charles Moore wrote of the lofty ambitions the Commission had for both the station and the plaza in his 1921 biography of Daniel Burnham, "the Washington depot was to be still finer [than the station in Frankfurt, Germany] . . . Facing one of the great avenues of the capital, it was to have as landscape setting a plaza capable of a development that should rival the Piazza di Termini in Rome." (note four in nomination - from Moore's book on Burnham, p. 173 ref. to rivaling Piazza di Termini, Rome, (Barsoum: 2)

In his November 1903 interview in the Washington Post, Burnham spoke first about the plaza before discussing the design of the station. "A great feature of [the station] will be the large plaza we will place in front of the station. It will be 1,100 feet in diameter, and from it will radiate a number of streets, an arrangement that will be in perfect keeping with the general plan of the city. In the center of the plaza we propose having a fountain that will throw up a solid dome of water." Burnham went on to describe the inclusion of evergreen trees, or another tree with dark coloring whose leaves would contrast nicely with the white, granite walls of the station. ("Next to Capitol in Size," WP 11/08/1903)

In 1906 Burnham wrote to Col. John Biddle, the District's Engineer Commissioner, who oversaw the realignment of Massachusetts Avenue, Delaware Avenue, E Street, and 1st Street, N.E. He described the plaza as, "semicircular in shape . . . and its contour is determined within narrow limits by the angles of the existing streets. The plan of the plaza contains three centers, or focal points, each of which is on the center of two streets entering the plaza, and the original scheme of treatment of the plaza called for three fountains whose location at the three focal points would place a glistening dome of water in the vista of all principal streets approaching the plaza." (Traceries: 8, note vi)

Biddle was interested in a configuration of the streets that was convenient to the public, but was also symmetrical and complemented the plaza. With the building of the station, Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues and E and 1st Streets, which all traversed the site of the station, would be interrupted. Biddle had the ultimate say in how the streets were laid out, but he took suggestions from architects and the public. The ultimate alignment, determined by 1904, placed the plaza at the center with the intersecting streets radiating out in all directions. (Traceries: 7-8)

Burnham's final concept of the plaza was published in the *Architectural Record* in 1908. It is semicircular in shape with the fountain as the focal point of the design. Shallow steps link the fountain, placed on axis with the entrance to the station and one of the three flagpoles, with the balustrades surrounding the fountains at the northeast and northwest corners of the plaza. Burnham's drawing details the focal points and axis of each feature—the fountain and station down Delaware Avenue towards the Capitol; the northeast fountain down E Street and the future Louisiana Avenue (a road is included in the design, but at the time of its construction, one did not exist), and the northwest fountain down 1st Street NE. Massachusetts Avenue forms a diagonal cross axis through the plaza. In this design, eight traffic islands line the outer edge of the plaza. The drawing indicates streetcar tracks outside the plaza only.

Not everyone was in favor of the plaza. Republican Speaker of the House Joseph "Uncle Joe" Cannon, who had previously opposed spending on the improvement of Washington, attempted to amend the Union Station bill—eventually approved in 1903 to subsidize construction—by striking out provisions for the plaza because it was estimated to cost \$700,000 ("For Union Station," WP 12/16/1902; Barsoum: 3). He adamantly believed, and sarcastically relayed to fellow members of Congress, that the city did not need more parks and that there would be adequate space in front of the station for public gatherings. Despite his vigorous opposition, he ultimately failed to prevent some Congressional funding for its construction and improvement.

Paving, Improvements, and Streetcars

Many improvements were necessary following the completion of the station. Grading and filling for construction greatly altered the elevation surrounding the station. The ground level in the area required approximately 35 feet of fill. (Strouse: 25) "The site originally sloped to the southwest with a rise toward the east. In order to create the plaza, 750,000 cubic yards of fill were required for the streets leading to the plaza." (Traceries 3) Fill required two to three years to settle, so the city had to wait before laying asphalt. Until then, muddy streets were common following a rainstorm. (Wright: 183 – 184)

By fall of 1908, nearly a year after the opening of the station, the area was still in need of improvement. A September 1908 article in the *Architectural Record* described the area: "at present the station stands in the midst of a desert, being surrounded on all sides by wide areas of brown dirt recently upturned, or deposited, and left to settle...that its effect will be greatly enhanced by the construction of the plaza can be readily understood." (*Architectural Record*, September 1908) In October, Congress appropriated \$100,000 and the Washington Terminal Company, the body made up of representatives from both railroad companies who were responsible for supervising the construction of the station and overseeing its operation, pledged \$50,000 for improving the plaza. ("Bids for Station Plaza," WP 10/20/1908:6;

Olszewski: 35-26)

In addition to necessary landscape improvements, access to the station via streetcar was initially an issue. When Union Station opened in 1907, streetcars did not reach the station and passengers traveled with their luggage several blocks from the nearest stop to the terminal. In December 1907, Senator Jacob H. Gallinger, Republican of New Hampshire, introduced a bill for the extension of the streetcar tracks to the station. Until the time the tracks could be completed, a temporary service would be used to get passengers to the station. ("Car Lines to Station," WP 12/6/1907: 16) At the end of June 1908, temporary tracks were laid to the station and permanent tracks were under construction. On June 24, 1908, the first passengers traveled by streetcars operated by the Washington Railway and Electric Co. and the Capital Traction Co., from a streetcar stop at Delaware Ave. and C St., N.W. to the station. ("Cars to New Station." WP 6/25/1908) By December 1908, permanent tracks were in place. (Wright: 197)

In anticipation of Taft's March 1909 inauguration, local merchants and hotel owners formed the Union Station Boardwalk Association to construct a boardwalk across the plaza site to the northeast corner of New Jersey Avenue and C Street, the former Baltimore & Ohio rail yards. This development was made necessary by the fact that no provisions had been made for the site in anticipation of the crowds that would travel through the area for the inauguration. The association's merchants and business owners erected a sign advertising their responsibility for the boardwalk. ("Citizens Build Sidewalk," WP 3/14/1909: TP4)

Photos of the plaza prior to the 1912 installation of the Columbus Fountain reveal that the streets appear paved. Though the surrounding lots are still littered with some debris, trees have been planted on their borders. (historic photo, MRCE, UNST
G1-F23-10164-D9-72211_DATE_)

First Draft of the Plaza

By 1910, several of the features from Burnham's drawings were installed around the plaza. The stone balustrades, with iron lampposts located "at proper intervals", were in place in front of the east and west carriage entrances, as well as the 30-foot-high rostral columns. The stone fountains at the far northeastern and northwestern sections of the plaza with their surrounding balustrades, as well as the shallow stairs that part where the future fountain would be, were also in place. The balustrades in front of the carriage entrances were made of granite from the E.B. Eliss Granite Company of Northfield, Vermont. The granite used to construct the balustrades surrounding the fountains was supplied by Woodbury Granite Company of Hardwick, Vermont. (Strouse 25-26) In addition, the eight elliptical and circular traffic islands surrounding the plaza were in place.

Also installed by 1910 were the three enormous flagpoles in front of the station. These features were inspired by the three flagpoles in front of the Cathedral of St. Mark's on the Piazza di San Marco in Venice. Those flagpoles are centered on the three arches of the cathedral's façade, and have large bronze bases with complex decorative programs. The St. Mark's flagpoles were designed and cast in 1505 by the Renaissance artist Allessandro Leopardi. Two of the bases depict Venice's supremacy on land and on sea, and the third represents the qualities of justice, strength, and plenty.

(planetware.com/venice/basilica-of-st-mark-flagpoles-i-vn-vbsmf.htm, March 5, 2008). The poles are surmounted by winged lions, the symbol of St. Mark, which are holding globes.

An additional feature that most likely took inspiration from the Piazza di San Marco are the four enormous rostral columns mounted on balustrades flanking the carriage entrances. On the Piazza di San Marco, at the entrance to the Grand Canal, are two grand columns named for Marco and Teodoro of Amasea, the patron saints of Venice. The column honoring St. Mark supports a statue of a winged lion and the other column holds a statue of Saint Teodoro. The columns serve as the official gateway to Venice. Given their meaning and the station's purpose as a gateway to the Capitol and the city, it would be fitting that these features from Venice served as Burnham's inspiration. Burnham's rostral columns served a practical as well as a symbolic purpose. The rostral columns on the plaza contain "two inverted, series, arc lamps enclosed in 20-in. globes, about 16 ft. above the street level." (Strouse: 25) An undated photograph reveals that the plaza, prior to the installation of the flagpoles and the Columbus memorial, was a wide-open, un-landscaped space, but it contained light fixtures of varying designs throughout and on the surrounding traffic islands. (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164-D9-72211_DATE_)

The first lightpost used at Columbus Plaza had the form of a classical column, supporting a spherical lamp that was bound vertically and horizontally with metal bands and surmounted by a finial. (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164_DATE) This appears to have been a larger version of the lightposts used on the rostral balustrades, and therefore a design of Burnham & Co. and similar in character to other decorative lighting elements the firm designed for the station. These lights were placed along the north sidewalk of the plaza, in a row set between the line of the three flagpoles and the line of the rostral balustrades. A smaller version of these lights stood on the north end plinths of the balustrades which surround the fountains.

In the traffic islands surrounding the plaza stood tall, fanciful late-Victorian light fixtures supporting double pendant lamps suspended from a horizontal shaft. The thin, attenuated posts rose to a foliate collar and capital, surmounted by a ball bearing a pointed finial. The same finial ornaments terminated the ends of the horizontal shaft from which the pendant lamps hung. It appears that these had been replaced with Twin-Twenties by 1934 (historic photo, MRCE, UNST 19-4-8-A_10_1934). Eight traffic islands, as revealed in early photographs, are evenly spaced between the plaza and the surrounding streets. Wagons and street cars traveled on opposite sides of the islands—wagons ferried passengers to the inner side of the plaza and streetcars made a loop on the outer side of the islands before turning and passing by the main entrance of the station.

Columbus Memorial, Completed Plaza

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition had celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World. Though imposing, its dozens of neoclassical and exotic buildings had been built of staff, a temporary material, and the fair was therefore dismantled soon after its closing. But the White City had inspired interest in creating a permanent national memorial to the explorer in Washington, DC. ("Columbus Statue: History of the Memorial," Evening Star 6/7/1912)

An Act of Congress, approved by President Theodore Roosevelt on March 4, 1907 (34 Stat. 1413), appropriated \$100,000 for a Columbus Memorial, and established a commission to select a site and design. Members included Secretary of War William H. Taft, who served as chairman; Secretary of State Elihu Root; Sen. George Peabody Wetmore, Republican of Rhode Island; Rep. James T. McCleary, Republican of Minnesota; and Edward L. Hearn, the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus. Charles S. Bromwell, the officer in charge of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, was made executive and disbursing officer of Columbus Memorial Commission (ARCE 1907; Bromwell was replaced by Spencer Cosby in 1909).

Edward Hearn's involvement indicated the important role played by the Knights of Columbus in its creation. (Barsoum: 3) Founded in 1882, the Knights of Columbus promoted greater recognition of the influence of Catholics in United States history. As historian Eve Barsoum writes in her National Register nomination for Columbus Plaza:

"The Knights of Columbus . . . believed in the inherent compatibility of Roman Catholicism and American fraternalism. Like all Americans, the Knights held that Columbus's discovery was linked to the evolution of liberty and progress, but the Knights also viewed it as a Roman Catholic event. This broadened concept of Columbus became known as Columbianism and it served as one of the many efforts to legitimize the Roman Catholic presence in America and end Protestant hegemony. The Knights wanted complete civil and religious rights for all. The passing of the legislation for the memorial . . . marked the culmination of the years of concerted effort by the Knights to counter nativism and anti-Catholic sentiment." (Barsoum: 3)

On February 4, 1908, at Secretary Taft's insistence, the memorial commission chose the plaza in front of Union Station as the most fitting site in Washington. Burnham submitted a design for the architectural framework for the memorial consisting of the pylon, fountain bowls, and balustrades. On March 19, the commission accepted Burnham's design and began preparing the program for the sculpture competition. On November 16th, Burnham & Co. were chosen as consulting architects on the project. (Barsoum: 3; Olzewski: 101)

Charles S. Bromwell administered the competition and by December 1908 twenty artists submitted twenty-one models. In February 1909, the commission chose the model by Lorado Taft, and he was awarded the commission in December. (Barsoum: 3; Olzewski: 101-102)

Lorado Taft

After training at the Illinois Industrial University (later the University of Illinois) and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Lorado Zadoc Taft (1860-1936) established a studio in Chicago and began designing architectural sculpture for Chicago buildings. He was selected to create the sculptural embellishment for William Le Baron Jenney's Horticulture Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. He produced two large groups that flanked the building's entrance, "The Sleep of the Flowers" and "The Awakening of the Flowers." This prestigious commission launched his career. (Barsoum: 4-5;

<http://images.library.uiuc.edu/projects/taft/taftbio.htm>, 2/29/08 – University Library,

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Lorado Taft: A Short Biographical Sketch”)

Over his long career, Taft created many portrait and allegorical works, heroic in scale and celebrating civic virtues. He became particularly known for his fountains. In addition to the Columbus Fountain, these include the Nymph Fountain (1898), the Paducah Fountain (c. 1909, Paducah, Kentucky), the Trotter Memorial Fountain (1911, Bloomington, Indiana), the Fountain of the Great Lakes (1913, Chicago), the Thatcher Memorial Fountain (1918, Denver, Colorado), and the immense Fountain of Time (1922, Chicago). In addition, Taft taught and lectured extensively. He was celebrated as the author of *The History of American Sculpture* (first published in 1903), the first study of nineteenth-century American sculpture.

Taft's conception for the Columbus Fountain was inspired by Frederick MacMonnies's famed "Barge of State" (also called "The Triumph of Columbia") at the World's Columbian Exposition. Located at the west end of the great basin designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., as the central feature of the fair's Court of Honor, this sculpture depicted an immense figure of Columbia, enthroned on a ship rowed by eight allegorical figures. Fame blew her trumpet in the bow, while at the stern, Father Time controlled the rudder.

On October 26, 1911, the Commission accepted Taft's final design of the memorial and construction began that same month. All work was completed on the statue by the end of May 1912. All the stone features used in the plaza were made from the same Bethel, Vermont granite used to build the station. The bowls in the two fountains at the outer edge of the plaza are made of green granite from Rockport, Maine. (Olszewski: 99)

Dedication of Memorial

Dedication of the memorial included the unveiling and a concurrent parade on June 8, 1912, and a few days of festivities. A few days beforehand, thousands of Knights of Columbus began streaming into the city. At 3 p.m. on the day itself, the memorial parade began processing from Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street, at the same time as the unveiling ceremony commenced at the plaza. The parade passed in front of the White House and marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to 2nd Street, N.W., where it turned north and then east on F Street, proceeding to Massachusetts Avenue, which it followed to Columbus Plaza. Here it passed the reviewing stand, President Taft presiding. The parade then continued down Massachusetts Avenue to Stanton Park, where it was reviewed by "supreme officers of the Knights of Columbus." ("Columbus Statue: Program of Events," *The Evening Star*, June 8, 1912, Washington, D.C. transcript in NAMA CR files, Desc/Res)

The dozens of organizations and institutions represented in the parade "made up a line that extended almost unbroken from the Treasury to the Capitol." ("Columbus Statue: The Procession," *Evening Star* 6/8/1912; NAMA CR files, Desc/Res) Among their numbers were divisions of the Knights of Columbus from throughout the United States, as well as Canada, Mexico, and Cuba – about 15,000 men in all. Divisions and battalions of the Army and Navy followed, along with representatives of Italian societies and members of the African American Knights of Pythias. Among the marchers were almost fifty bands and floats representing Columbus's voyages, "the influence of his discoveries on the world's civilization and knowledge", and the peoples of the Old and New Worlds; "The float of the United Italian

Societies of Washington, representing the caravel in which Columbus sailed from Palos, and bearing figures emblematic of Europe and America, was one of the artistic features of the parade.” (“Columbus Statue: The Procession,” Evening Star 6/8/1912)

The dedication of the statue was notable for the involvement of prominent Catholics and Protestants. Monsignor Thomas Shahan, rector of the Catholic University of America, delivered the invocation. Victor J. Dowling, former National Director of the Knights of Columbus and Justice of the New York Supreme Court, spoke of Columbus’s “historical significance.” (Barsoum: 4) The Italian ambassador, Marquis Cusani Confalonieri, pulled the cord which revealed the memorial:

“No more impressive ceremony has been witnessed in Washington in many years than that presented when the clinging folds of red and white, with their union of blue studded with white stars, slowly parted, swept aside and revealed the perfect sculpture, flawlessly, dazzlingly white, of the beautiful memorial, its shaft crowned with a globe, its face carved into a semblance of the prow of an ancient caravel bearing the sculptured effigy of a woman’s figure typifying the spirit of discovery, back of which stands the heroic figure of Columbus, calm, unmoved, serene and purposeful.” (“Columbus Statue: The Dedication,” Evening Star 6/9/1912, NAMA CR files, Desc/Res)

During the twenty-one gun salute which followed, wreaths were laid by the Knights, Italian societies, and the Italian and Spanish governments, and the Marine Band played the national anthem. President Taft delivered the final address.

In the evening, a fireworks display was held on the Washington Monument grounds, and Pennsylvania Avenue and other downtown streets were given a “general illumination.” A banquet was held at the “convention hall,” the venue of a concert by the Marine Band and Symphony Orchestra the following night. (“Columbus Statue: Program of Events,” Evening Star 6/8/1912; transcript in NAMA CR files, Desc/Res; also “Columbus Statue: The Dedication,” Evening Star 6/9/1912)

Not Quite Finished

Following the dedication, the fountain was found to have several defective stones, which were replaced in July and August 1912; to properly seal the fountain basin, it was lined with lead. All work was completed by September 30, 1912. The final cost of the Columbus Memorial was \$100,456.42. (ARCE 1913 & 1912)

For a couple of years following the plaza’s 1912 dedication, the architectural and sculptural framework surrounded terraces of bare dirt. In March 1914, the D.C. Commissioners, concerned about the plaza’s condition, submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts a temporary plan of lawns and flower beds that they deemed “desirable and necessary.” The CFA “strongly disapproved” of this scheme, and directed CFA member Pierce Anderson to develop a separate temporary treatment plan. (CFA Minutes 3/20/1914:1) In May, Anderson presented a plan on behalf of the Burnham firm to the CFA. The commission’s minutes provide little information about the plan’s specifics. It may have been based on Burnham’s 1906 treatment study for the plaza, since the minutes state that Anderson changed some

features of an existing plan. As built, the plaza's lawn panels and plantings also resemble a plan dated 1912 bearing the name of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (and of Burnham), which might also be an adaptation of the 1906 Burnham plan, and may reflect Anderson's 1914 proposal. (CFA Minutes 5/8/1914:8) No further details are provided in the minutes. Thus, without further research, the origins and development of the plaza plan cannot be determined more precisely. However, it seems probable that the OPBG plan of 1912 and Anderson's plan of 1914 were the same or nearly so, and that the paving and planting scheme as it exists today reflects both.

The 1914 annual report of the D.C. Commissioners recorded that the plaza was paved that year with brick and the lawn panels were added. "The central island on the Plaza in from the Union Station was improved under a plan which called for a grass treatment combined with such necessary walkways as were deemed necessary to give convenient access to the station. These walkways were constructed of a good quality red vitrified brick." (Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia: 44-45) The plaza's brick pavement is laid in a herringbone pattern. The bricks were placed on their narrow, rather than their wider, sides, as if being laid to build a vertical wall. Determining whether this is the earliest paving requires additional research.

For many years, the panels were simply planted with grass. On both terrace levels, they defined bilaterally symmetrical, wedge-shaped sections delineating pedestrian walks that seem to have been aligned with street crossings. The east and west panels on the upper terrace are more complicated polygonal shapes than the others, as they surround the two fountains in their semicircular balustraded enclosures and then extend in towards the center of the plaza. The two central panels on the lower terrace have curved inside edges, reflecting the footprint of the Columbus Fountain's basin. The surrounding traffic islands were also planted with grass, surrounded by perimeter sidewalks and curbs.

In 1915/16, Columbus Plaza was transferred from the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to the Chief of Engineers, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, Annual Report 1916).

Crowds Fill Columbus Plaza

Within a few years of its completion, Columbus Plaza was fulfilling its purpose as a gathering place for the public to welcome dignitaries to Washington. In 1916 throngs of people gathered in the plaza to greet President Wilson upon his return to the city following his re-election. The crowds "were never exceeded in the history of Washington." ("Wilson Gets Ovation," 11/13/1916: 1) In 1919, the masses gathered again in Columbus Plaza to welcome General Pershing to Washington following World War I. ("Guns to Welcome Gen. Pershing Today," WP 9/12/1919; Wright, 1998-99: 27) Twenty years later people filled the plaza to welcome the King and Queen of England.



Columbus Plaza, Union Station, and surrounding lots between 1908 and 1912. Note absence of Columbus Fountain (Historic Photo, MRCE, NCR files, UNST G1-F23-10164-D9-7221).

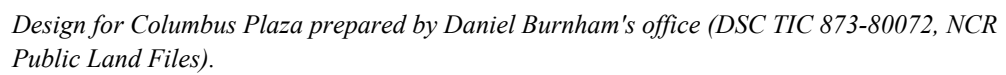


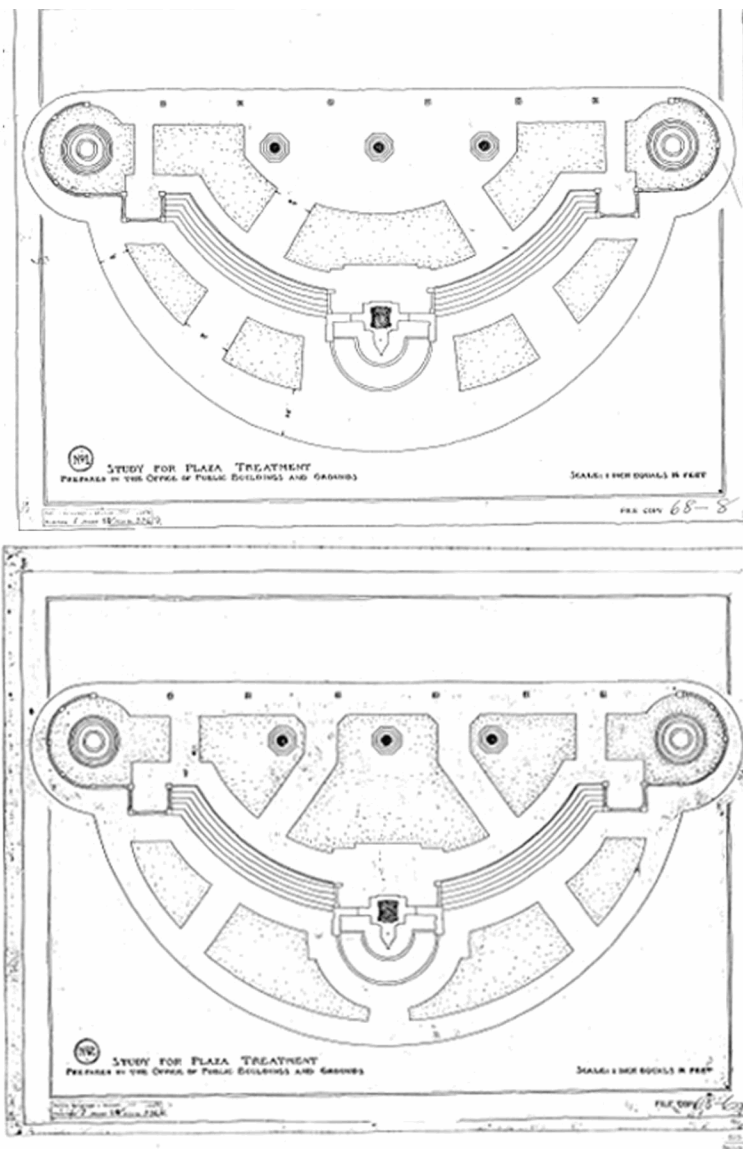
Left, Columbus Plaza and the surrounding area between 1907 - 1910; Right, Delaware Avenue between 1907 - 1910 (Courtesy of the Library of Congress).



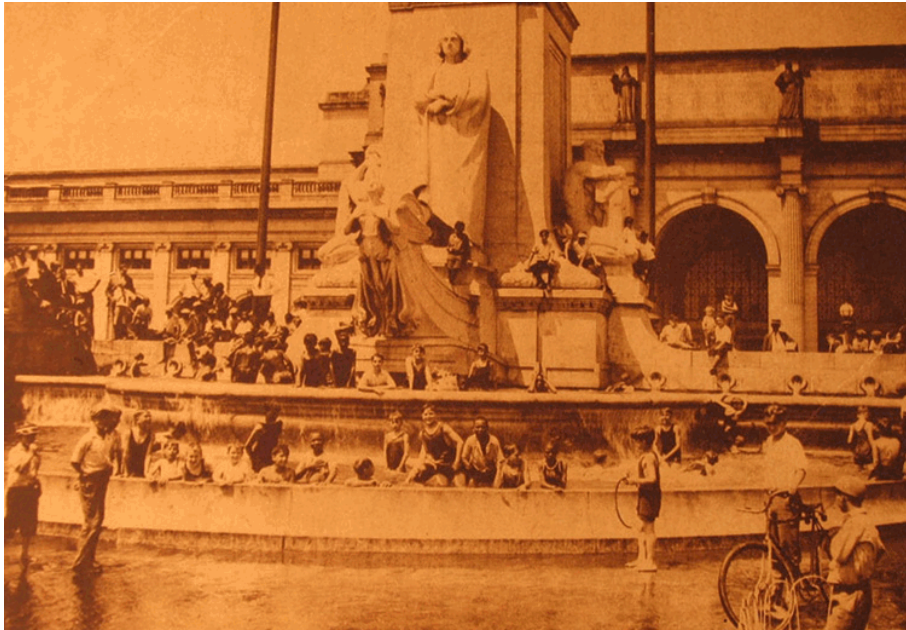
Above, workers preparing the fountain for the dedication; Below, President Taft, Dedication of Columbus Fountain, June 8, 1912 (Courtesy of the Library of Congress).

National Mall & Memorial Parks - L'Enfant Plan Reservations





Landscape treatment proposals prepared by The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds in 1914 (DSC TIC 873-80008, 873-80073, NCR Public Land Files).



Children playing in Columbus Fountain, 1926 (Courtesy of the Martin Luther King Memorial Library).

1915-1954, EXTENSION OF THE U.S. CAPITOL GROUNDS

Between Union Station and the U.S. Capitol lies an extensive landscaped park, a direct result of the construction of the station and Columbus Plaza. The construction of the station led to concern about the appearance of the area between these two major buildings. Early photographs reveal a barren area surrounding the plaza following its completion. (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164-D9-72211_DATE_) The unsightly surroundings threatened to undermine the purpose of Union Station and Columbus Plaza as the grand gateway to the Capitol and Washington. Beautification of the area was a concern throughout the construction of the plaza. In July 1909 District Commissioner Henry Litchfield West recommended to the other commissioners of the city that billboards and signs be banned from the surrounding vacant lots so as not to block the view of the station. ("Billboards not for Plaza," WP 7/8/1909: 5)

Evan H. Tucker, President of the Northeast Washington Citizens' Association, recalled the state of the neighborhood: "Conditions were very ugly down there, and we needed something of that sort to make the proper entrance to the city of Washington, the gateway to the National Capital...you who are more familiar with the project of Union Station, know that at that point there was a fill made of 35 feet which left the properties way down in the hollows. It was one of the most ugly situations that could be imagined for the gateway, to a great, national capital." (House Doc. 124:254) A photograph of the plaza taken prior to the installation of the fountain reveals that the few houses in lots to the south of Columbus Plaza needed bridges from their front doors to cross the expanse created by the fill. (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164-D9-72211_DATE_)

Senator George Peabody Wetmore, Republican of Rhode Island (1895-1907, 1908-1913), also believed it was necessary to do something to improve the area. Wetmore wanted to build a park as an extension of the Capitol grounds that would, with Columbus Plaza, form a fitting entrance to the city. Wetmore served on the Columbus Memorial Competition, the Lincoln Memorial Commission, and helped found the Commission of Fine Arts. In April 1908, he made his first attempt to create a park with the introduction of bill S. 6713 to acquire land between Union Station and the Capitol. Wetmore's 1908 bill failed, but in 1910 an act (36 Stat. 738) authorized the acquisition of twelve squares of land, established a commission to acquire property, and provided an annual budget of \$500,000 towards establishing the park. (Final Report: 1; "Approve Plaza Plan," WP 5/16/1909:13.)

The creation of a park, according to a May 1909 Washington Post article, would "not only impress visitors on leaving the station with the beauty of Washington, but will prevent the erection of unsightly buildings in such close proximity to the Capitol and the several other imposing structures which grace the neighboring landscape." These improvements would also satisfy people who wanted to make Washington a "City Beautiful." ("Approve Plaza Plan," WP 5/16/1909)

Between about 1910 and 1928, the federal government obtained title to the twelve squares of land comprising about thirty-six acres. Three commissions, the first in 1910, were successively appointed to purchase land. A fourth commission was established in 1928 "for the purpose of perfecting plans for the development of these squares." They purchased additional land adjacent to the original twelve squares. (Final Report: 18-19)

Informal studies following the 1910 act were made by several architects, including Daniel Burnham, Thomas Hastings, Samuel Parsons and Pierce Anderson. (Final Report: 4) Under Architect of the Capitol David Lynn and architect William E. Parsons, of Bennett, Parsons & Frost of Chicago, a park was constructed that featured tree-lined avenues, gardens, pedestrian walks, a terraced plaza with a large fountain, and an underground parking garage. "First impressions always are important, Mr. Lynn said, and he predicted that there would be no city in the world that would make such a favorable first impression upon the visitors as will Washington after the proposed park is completed... Once this and other projects have been completed, it is expected that the fortune-telling stands and the other shops that have horrified visitors will disappear." ("Union Plaza Park Coming," WP 12/22/1927:1.)

The twelve squares included 632-634, 680-685, and 721-723. (House Doc. 125:247-248) The first two squares were bought through condemnation in April 1912. Several commercial buildings, modest homes and apartment buildings stood on the acquired lots, as well as houses occupied by members of Congress on B Street. The B&O Company or a subsidiary owned much of the land. Bliss Properties, another substantial landowner in the area sold many properties to the federal government, including the five-story Driscoll Hotel and its eight-story annex, and the Bliss Building, which occupied the corner of Constitution Avenue and Arthur Place (bound by C Street and Constitution Avenue). (Final Report 76-77, 88) With the condemnation of land for parkland, the value of these structures began to rise. (House Doc. 125:37-38ff)

War Housing

By 1916, about half of the land had been purchased. Before the acquisitions could be finished or the park built, however, new structures, known as the Union Plaza Dormitories (also as the Washington Dormitories, Washington Residence Halls, and the Government Hotels), arose on the acquired land. Following the entrance of the United States into World War I in April 1917, Congress authorized the construction of thirteen dormitories to house almost 2000 young women. The buildings occupied fifteen acres, comprising four of the blocks in front of Union Station, including land already acquired by Congress and land rented from the B&O.

Prominent Washington architect Waddy B. Wood designed the Colonial Revival structures, constructed of plastered concrete and tile blocks between 1918 and 1920. Like other temporary war buildings in Washington, the dormitories remained standing for longer than intended. When the dormitories were built, an agreement was reached stating that they could be occupied for a year after peace was declared, an event which occurred on November 14, 1922; however, the date of occupancy was extended to February 1, 1924. The government paid rent to B&O for use of their land through the end of 1925 (earlier, the B&O had been paid through the reimbursement of its city taxes; House Doc. 125:217-218). On August 17, 1927, the B&O Railroad was paid a balance of \$67,695.92 for its property: “this settlement concluded the purchase of the areas for enlarging the Capitol Grounds as described in the sundry civil act of June 25 1910. . .” (House Doc. 125:218) In the late 1920s, several were converted for use as government offices, including the Juvenile Court and the National Guard. These temporary structures were finally razed in 1930 to make way for the construction of the park. (Goode 2003: 486-487, also WP 1/10/1919:7)

Park Construction Finally Under Way

By 1927, Architect of the Capitol David Lynn reported that fifty-five acres for the new park had been acquired for a cost of \$5,655,930.72. By this time, plans had been approved by the NCPPC and the CFA, though they were somewhat more formal than what was actually built. (“Union Plaza Park,” WP 12/22/1927:1) The Union Park Plaza Bill of 1929 funded “the last link in a chain of projects that will improve and beautify the area surrounding the Capitol.” The bill also provided funding for rerouting streetcar lines around the station. (Traceries: 11)

In December 1929, President Herbert Hoover requested that Congress provide an estimated \$1,277,000 in deficiency appropriations to begin work that winter to improve two squares at the eastern side of the park and building the underground garage, Capitol Hill’s first (Allen: 407). By the fall of 1930, all the structures occupying the original twelve squares were razed. (Final Report: 7) The sum of \$4,900,000 was requested in the federal budget for 1931 to continue working on the park. (“Capital Park Extension,” WP 12/13/1929:6)

At least through the mid-1920s, a ball field and track lay in the block southeast of Columbus Plaza. The Washington Post reported on an annual school track meet: “Construction of the new track at the plaza has greatly helped the Washington team in its training.” (“Playground Athletes Will Meet at Plaza,” WP 9/4/1925) A historic photo provides a vivid birds-eye view of the track and the plaza beyond (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164_DATE_). This track most likely was dismantled by 1930-31 for the extension of the Capitol grounds.

In creating the new park, roads were removed, altered, and created. Between 1930 and 1935, Arthur Place from Constitution Avenue to C Street and portions of C and 2nd Streets were eliminated. E Street from North Capitol Street to Union Station was widened from 35 to 56 feet and repaved. (Final Report: 9-11) First Street was widened from 35 to 56 feet, repaved, and streetcar tracks were installed. Louisiana Avenue was created in 1931 (Final Report: 9). It was intended that the avenue would begin at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and 1st Street, N.W., where the Peace Monument (1877) stood, and would run to Columbus Plaza on axis with the western fountain. But the 150-foot-wide avenue was shifted southwest to connect with Pennsylvania Avenue at 2nd Street and Constitution Avenue, rather than at 1st, so that it would not cut into the Capitol Grounds. (“Union Plaza Park,” WP 12/22/1927:1)

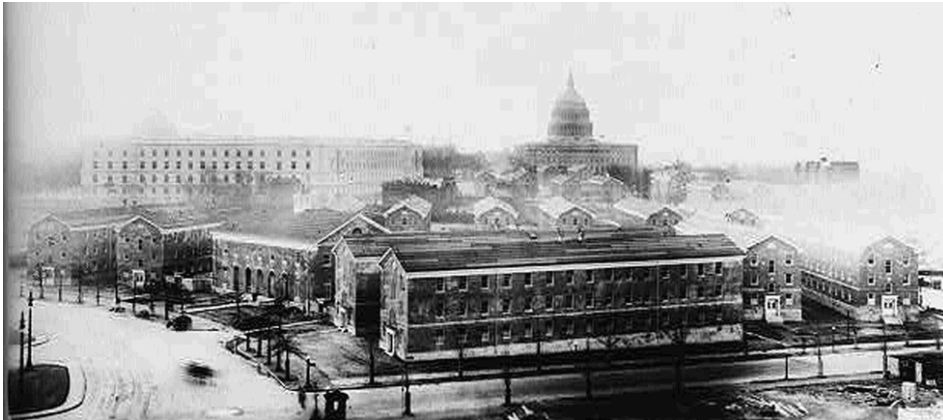
Delaware Avenue was widened to align its axis between the dome of the Capitol and the center of Union Station’s façade. It was therefore aligned with the center of the Columbus Fountain, “thus providing a dominating, dignified, and adequate approach to the Capitol.” (House Doc. 125:28, referring to Senate Report No. 401, 61st Cong., 2nd Sess.) The result was that, as with the widened Delaware Avenue, Columbus Plaza was tied to the monumental core of the District through circulation and views. (House Doc. 125:25) In addition, between 1930 and 1935, streetcar tracks were removed from Delaware Avenue and reinstalled on 1st Street, NE. (Final Report: 9, 197-202)

By 1936, more than 5,000 trees and shrubs were planted and 15,000 pounds of grass seed were used in planting the approximately 35 acres of lawn. (Final Report: 13) Union Plaza Park was finally completed in 1940. (Final Report: 1)

Traffic Island Changes

Following the improvement of the Capitol grounds, there were several changes in the configuration of the plaza’s traffic islands. By 1932, possibly due to the inclusion of Louisiana Avenue and the widening of streets, the eight traffic islands surrounding the plaza had been changed to five; three were rebuilt as ovals. (Olszewski: A32; TIC 873/80075 and TIC 873/80076). They retained the same features as the original islands with curbs, perimeter sidewalks, and streetlights, and were planted with grass. Within the next four years, a small circular sixth island was added at the west end. (TIC 873/80014, undated but probably prior to 1936; TIC 873/80076) Between 1936 and 1954, a narrow raised median was built between Massachusetts Avenue and the inner ring, creating an additional ring at the plaza and a new re-circulating road for traffic. (This median appears in the following MRCE photographs: UNST G1-F23-2_DATE; UNST G1-F23-3_DATE; UNST G1-F23-4_DATE; UNST G1-F23-31_DATE; DDOT drawing 873/80014, probably from 1936; Tracerics: 11) Parking was allowed on either side of the re-circulating road. The number of islands was later reduced again to five, according to 1965 drawing 876/86233.

The installation of the continuous traffic island between 1936 and 1954 provided pedestrians with a buffer between the eastern- and western-bound cars. Historic photos from as early as 1945 reveal crosswalks in place from the plaza to the medians and on to the corners of the adjoining streets. (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-1_DATE; UNST G1-F23-4_DATE; courtesy Washingtoniana Collection, Union Station Southview 5-1-1945)



World War I era dorms to the west of Columbus Plaza (Courtesy of the Library of Congress).



View of temporary structures and Senate office building along Delaware Avenue (Courtesy of the Library of Congress).

1955 – 2008, MID-TWENTIETH TO EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Little had changed on the pedestrian area of Columbus Plaza from the introduction of the grass panels and brick paving until the 1960s. By the 1930s, if not earlier, the lawns panels were

surrounded by hooped fences, or iron hoops in the shape of an inverted U, standing approximately two feet tall. The presence of the irons suggests that, from the beginning, people were cutting across the flat lawns. One significant absence was from 1962 to 1965 during which the three flagpoles at the north end of the plaza were removed and replaced.

Plantings were introduced into the lawn panels between 1965 and 1967 as part of Lady Bird Johnson's Washington beautification projects. Roses donated by Reader's Digest were installed in the panels on the upper terrace. On the polygonal panels to the east and west, lawns remained around the fountains, and roses were planted in beds on the areas extending into the plaza. The rose variety chosen was the pink floribunda "Bonnie Pink."

Changes continued to take place in the configuration of the traffic islands. Sometime between the years 1969 and 1974, the narrow raised median was rebuilt in its current form, as a long, wide, asymmetrical median. The line of circular and elliptical islands was replaced by a series of more linear islands. (See development and planting plan dated 1974, DSC TIC 873/80010, based on the undated 873/80014, showing the previous arrangement of traffic islands.) Between 1975 and 1985, at the far northwest of the plaza, the median was extended and transformed into a large sidewalk which enveloped the balustrades and rostral columns. During this period, an additional kidney-shaped median at the west side of the plaza was also constructed. Portions of the new center median and adjoining medians to the east were paved with Belgian block. Photographs taken by the Historic American Engineering Record in 1977 reveal extensive construction of the traffic islands at the plaza. (Union Station Plaza. Washington, D. C. Sec. 1201, MP 137.00. HAER DC, WASH, 559-2)

Oblong medians were also constructed between the plaza and Union Station between 1966 to 1974 to separate tour bus traffic and station traffic. (See DSC TIC 873/80007 [1974] and DSC TIC 873/80033 [1966] demonstrating the addition of the medians.) In 1966, magnolias, also part of Lady Bird Johnson's beautification project, were planted in the traffic islands, with an underplanting of santolina.

National Visitor Center

In honor of the Bicentennial, Congress passed Public Law 94-320 on June 25, 1976. Therein, the Secretary of the Interior was directed to erect a flagpole for each state and territory, fifty-five in all, on the U.S. Capitol grounds, adjacent to the sidewalks on the outside edge of Massachusetts Avenue and across from Columbus Plaza. A flagpole representing the District of Columbia was added in 2002, bringing the total to fifty six. The flags are arranged from west to east in the order of states' admission to the Union.

"The flags, to be flown on white painted poles in order to strengthen the definition of the plaza area, appear to be well-scaled to the plaza and present no conflict with the three principal flags in front of the Visitors' Center." (J. Carter Brown, Chairman, CFA, to Manus J. Fish, Director, NCP. Letter, re: state flags. April 24, 1975.) Brown also stated the desirability of coordinating lighting with flag display: "It's always a bit disturbing to see a flag being displayed in a relatively darkened area, and the existing street lights will not provide sufficient illumination for this purpose. By all means, these flags should have a festive air twenty-four hours a day." (J. Carter Brown, Chairman, CFA, to Manus J. Fish, Director, NCP. Letter, re:

state flags. April 24, 1975.)

The development and planned opening of the National Visitor Center in Union Station in 1976 called for some changes at Columbus Plaza. About 1975 hedges were planted on the linear central median, which previously was only planted with grass. (Historic photo, MRCE UNST G1-F23-31-CO shows grass) A hedge of Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) was planted along the rear, or north, edge, and a lower hedge of juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* variety 'wiltoni') was planted along the front, or south, edge, with a floral display bed in between. From 1977 to 1981 new or additional plant materials were added, including 620 azaleas (Delaware Valley white), 1200 Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata compacta*), 2 Angelica holly (*Ilex opaca* 'Angelica'), and 1330 blue rug juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'wiltoni'). (873/80015 [revised 1977] and Darwina L. Neal, LA, NCR, to General Manager, National Visitors Center. Memo, re: Revised development plan. April 24, 1975. BF). The National Capital Planning Commission described the new installation:

“The landscape plan is in keeping with the approved preliminary site development plan even though the planting area has been expanded to cover the entire island at the east end. The symmetry should be maintained by the shape and height of the holly hedge along the northern margins of the island. The juniper borders on the opposite side of the planted area should be kept low so that the flower beds are not hidden from view of motorists passing by the plaza on Massachusetts Avenue. The planting of the flower beds with seasonally blooming flowers will maintain color in the plaza for much of the growing season and should be superior to the previously proposed azaleas which bloom only once for a short time each spring.” (NCPC 5/29/1975:1)

Circulation patterns were reconfigured with the traffic islands to their present layout in connection with construction of the opening of the National Visitor Center in 1976. (Tracerics: 11) Due in part to its failure to attract a sufficient number of visitors, but also because of major structural issues, the visitor center proved to be a failure and closed within two years of opening.

Freedom Bell

The American Legion Freedom Bell, installed in 1981 just north of the Columbus Fountain, is a replica of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell that is about twice the size of the original. The bell was one of the more than 500 exhibitions which traveled throughout the United States from April 1975 to December 1976 on the American Freedom Train, a privately-funded Bicentennial event. The bell apparently was commissioned by the American Legion, which later donated it to the nation.

The National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee reviewed several sites, including Constitution Gardens and Arlington Ridge Park (site of the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial), before recommending Columbus Plaza. The bell is about seven feet high by seven feet wide and weighs roughly 16,000 pounds. The location was chosen through triangulation:

“A location on the major axis just below the base of an equilateral triangle inscribed in a larger equilateral triangle linking the three flag staffs and statue was selected, thereby

resulting in a position closer to the Columbus Statue than to the [three] flag staffs. The bell in this position could be viewed as having the statue as a background rather than another isolated entity to clutter the plaza composition. A circle thirty feet in diameter was used to define the limits of the base, thus compl[e]menting the half-circular geometry of the brick paved plaza.” (untitled documented, NCR LUCE File)

The middle section of the central rose bed was removed to allow installation of the bell; the area was then paved with red brick laid in a circular pattern: “Placement of the bell will require removal of a circular portion of the rosebed in such a fashion that the cutting edge will relate to the inside wall of the Columbus Statue.” (NPS American Legion Freedom Bell . . . Executive Director’s Recommendation, 12/28/79, NCPC file No. 1787; NCR LUCE File) The new bricks matched the existing type of brick.

Jack Patrick of International Design Associates in Silver Spring, Maryland designed the support, a double post-and-beam steel structure standing eleven feet high that suspends the bell from a yoke to a height of nineteen inches above the plaza. The bell can be rung on ceremonial occasions. (On design of yoke, see CFA minutes Jan. 19, 1978) Apparently, two concrete shafts were drilled down to base rock, 40 to 45 feet below. (Memo from Allen J. Wright Associates, Consulting Engineer, no date, NCR LUCE File) Set within the paving beneath the front, or north, edge of the bell is a bronze dedicatory plaque bearing the following inscription in capital letters: “The Freedom Bell/Dedicated to/the spirit of the Bicentennial/on behalf of/the children of our nation/given by/the American Legion/and/American Legion Auxiliary/1981”

A Joint Resolution authorized erection of the bell “on behalf of the children of America in honor of the Bicentennial” (American Legion Freedom Bell, Public Law 94-483, Oct. 12, 1976)

With the opening of a refurbished Union Station in 1988, the additional pedestrian traffic from the station and the adjoining Metro stop, the plaza has been site of consistent visitation.

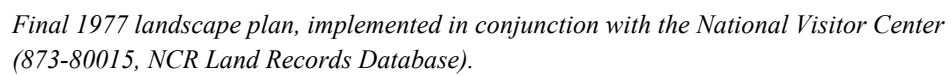
Recent History

In 2007 the water supply to the fountains was turned off due to concerns about damage to the fountains and the plaza following the discovery of a water main break and deteriorated pipes beneath the Columbus fountain. The park is taking steps to stabilize the plaza’s structures and systems.

Today, Columbus Fountain continues to be the site of an annual event held by the Knights of Columbus. Categorized as a national celebration, this occasion is specifically mentioned in the CFR (36 CFR 7.96) as a “Columbus Day Commemorative Wreath-Laying.”

The District of Columbia Department of Transportation has plans to reconfigure the traffic islands surrounding the plaza and remove the re-circulating road. Under their plan, the pedestrian plaza will be extended out to the traffic median.

National Mall & Memorial Parks - L'Enfant Plan Reservations



Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

INTRODUCTION

This section provides an evaluation of the physical integrity of the cultural landscape of Columbus Plaza, US Reservation 334, by comparing landscape characteristics and features present during the period of significance (1903-1914) with current conditions. Landscape characteristics are the tangible and intangible aspects of a landscape that allow visitors to understand its cultural value. Collectively, they express the historic character and integrity of a landscape. Landscape characteristics give a property cultural importance and uniqueness. Each characteristic or feature is classified as contributing or non-contributing to the site's overall historic significance.

Landscape characteristics comprise landscape features. Landscape features are classified as contributing if they were present during the property's period of significance. Non-contributing features (those that were not present during the historical period) may be considered "compatible" when they fit within the physical context of the historic period and attempt to match the character of contributing elements in a way that is sensitive to the construction techniques, organizational methods, or design strategies of the historic period. Incompatible features are those that are not harmonious with the quality of the cultural landscape and, through their existence, can lessen the historic character of a property. For those features that are listed as undetermined, further primary research, which is outside the scope of this CLI, is necessary to determine the feature's origination date. Landscape characteristics and features, individually and as a whole, express the integrity and historic character of the landscape and contribute to the property's historic significance.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

Contributing landscape characteristics identified for Columbus Plaza are spatial organization, topography, vegetation, circulation, land use, small-scale features, constructed water features, views and vistas, and buildings and structures. This section also includes an evaluation of the property's integrity in accordance with National Register criteria. Historic integrity, as defined by the National Register, is the authenticity of a property's identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the site's historic period. The National Register recognizes seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Several or all of these aspects must be present for a site to retain historic integrity. To be listed on the National Register a property not only must be shown to have significance under one of the four criteria, but must also retain integrity.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES

The spatial organization of the site remains similar to its arrangement during the period of significance. The Columbus fountain still retains its role as the focal point in the center of the plaza. The landscape and the circulation pattern established in 1914 still shapes the spatial organization of the site today.

Columbus Plaza retains the same features that characterized its topography during the period of significance. The plaza is two levels—one level rising slightly above the other.

While much of today's vegetation is non-contributing, six of the lawn panels have retained the original shape from the historic period. Lawn is still present in most of the panels. On the upper plaza the center panel was reconfigured into two areas with the installation of the Freedom Bell in 1981.

The introduction of the lawn panels and the paving created pathways and contributed to the overall visual and organizational program of the plaza. These patterns, along with the herringbone brick paving, date to the period of significance. The traffic islands have been altered significantly since 1914. The original eight islands have been replaced and reconfigured.

The views and vistas for Columbus Plaza retain integrity to the period of significance. The U.S. Capitol to the south of the plaza is still clearly visible. Views of Union Station to the north, as well as internal plaza views are largely intact. The surrounding streets have changed considerably since the period of significance. Tree canopy growth and parked cars impair some views, but views down adjacent roads are still possible. Drivers and pedestrians passing the plaza to the north have unobstructed views of the plaza that retain integrity from the historic period. Those traveling by car to the south of the plaza have a somewhat obstructed view due to the pyracantha hedges along the center median.

The three large flagpoles are the only small-scale features at Columbus Plaza from the period of significance. Several additional non-contributing, small scale features, have been added that are related to the maintenance and operation of the site, including trashcans, light fixtures, and signs.

Columbus Plaza's three constructed water features, the Columbus Fountain and the two bowl fountains, date from the period of significance. Unlike the two smaller fountains, Columbus Fountain was installed as a memorial to Christopher Columbus and its primary function is commemorative.

Balustrade walls surrounding the bowl fountains and the granite stairs leading to the lower level of the plaza are the only contributing structures from the period of significance. The Freedom Bell, introduced in 1981, falls outside the historic period.

The Seven Aspects of Integrity

1. Location is the place where the historic property was constructed. Columbus Plaza, US Reservation 334, retains its original location at the intersection of Massachusetts and Delaware Avenues, and E and First streets, NE. Louisiana Avenue, created in the 1930s, also intersects with the plaza.
2. Design is the composition of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a cultural landscape or historic property. Almost all of the elements from the period of significance are intact on the pedestrian section of the plaza. The circulation patterns, created by the construction of the lawn panels and the paving in 1914, remain from the period of significance. The introduction of the Freedom Bell in 1981 altered the spatial organization and the lawn panel design on the upper plaza. The original eight traffic islands surrounding the plaza have been replaced and reconfigured since the period of significance.

3. Setting is the physical environment of a cultural landscape or historic property. The street configuration had remained relatively unchanged since the period of significance except for the addition of Louisiana Avenue in the 1930s. The improvement and enlargement of the Capitol grounds, as well as the installation of the state and territorial flags in honor of the Bicentennial, have altered the appearance of the surrounding squares. Despite this alteration, they have added to the function of the area as a gateway to the U.S. Capitol.

4. Materials are the physical elements of a particular period, including the construction materials, paving, plants, and other landscape features. Columbus Plaza retains integrity of materials. Materials remaining from the period of significance include the marble of the Columbus fountain and the granite of the two bowl fountains, the staircase, the herringbone brick paving, and the three flagpoles at the north of the plaza. Lawn panels introduced in 1914 are still present and retain their integrity, though roses and seasonal plants were introduced to the panels in the 1960s.

5. Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular period. At Columbus Plaza a high level of workmanship is still extant and visible in the sculptural features of the plaza, as well as herringbone brick pattern pavement.

6. Feeling is the ability of a historic property to evoke the aesthetic or historic sense of the past period of time. Columbus Plaza retains integrity of feeling from the historic period. Columbus Plaza, with its Beaux Arts/City Beautiful design features, still retains its aesthetic sense of the past. This feeling is heightened by the plaza's relationship with, and proximity to, another Beaux Arts/City Beautiful landmark: Union Station. Columbus Plaza still serves as a gateway to the U.S. Capitol for people arriving in Washington via Union Station. With its view of the Capitol building, the plaza offers much the same sense of excitement visitors would have felt when arriving at Union Station during the historic period.

7. Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. Columbus Plaza retains its significance for its association with Union Station and the United States Capitol. Columbus Plaza is also associated with the McMillan Plan for the improvement of Washington. It was a feature included in the Commission's 1902 report and designed by Daniel Burnham, a member of the Commission. Burnham also designed Union Station.

CONCLUSIONS

After evaluating the landscape features and characteristics within the context of the seven aspects of integrity established by the National Register, this CLI finds that, though there have been alterations and additions to the plaza since the period of significance, Columbus Plaza retains integrity.

Aspects of Integrity:	Location
	Design
	Setting
	Materials
	Workmanship
	Association
	Feeling

Landscape Characteristic:

Spatial Organization

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

The semi-circular shape of Columbus Plaza was determined by the intersection of the streets surrounding Union Station. In Daniel Burnham's plan, the plaza is divided into sections serving pedestrians and vehicles. The pedestrian section historically consists of the three large flagpoles at the rear, or north end of the plaza; the fountains at the east and west outer edges with their surrounding balustrades; and the shallow steps between the balustrades that are separated by Columbus Fountain. Burnham's original design included a fountain as a centerpiece of the plaza. The flagpoles and the eastern and western fountains make up a symmetrical northern border of the plaza. Evenly-spaced single-globe light posts are just outside this composition. All the features of the original design were installed prior to the 1912 dedication of Columbus Fountain. Once the memorial was installed, the focal point of the plaza became the fountain which is on axis with Delaware Avenue, the center of the three flagpoles, and the Capitol.

In the original design, between each structure on the plaza, were open spaces free of vegetation. In addition, except for the square semi-enclosure of the balustrades adjacent to the eastern and western fountains, the plaza was made up of rounded, semicircular spaces and shapes. Where there are round or rectilinear features on the border of the plaza, the features on the interior mimic these details.

Outside the pedestrian areas, eight capsule-like medians or traffic islands created inner and outer rings of the plaza. At the far northeast and northwest sections of the plaza were additional balustrades flanking the carriage entrances with pairs of grand rostral column light posts. These balustrades served as lane markers separating cars and carriages using the lane closest to the station from streetcars traveling via the lane closest to the plaza.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The open spaces in the original design have been altered over the years by the inclusion of the Liberty Bell in 1981 and the introduction of vegetation at different times, but the focal point of the plaza—Columbus Fountain—has not changed.

The traffic medians have undergone the most significant alteration since the completion of the

plaza in 1914. Their current configuration has been in place since the 1970s.

Views and Vistas

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

As with all elements of the McMillan Plan, views played a key role in determining the location and style of Columbus Plaza and the arrangement of its features. Its existence arose from the desire to emphasize the view between Union Station and the United States Capitol, as did the location of Union Station itself. As a piece of the grand entrance to the city, the plaza provided a space for visitors to look at the U.S. Capitol—some for the first time.

The plaza was designed so that a future fountain would be on axis with the Capitol and the main entrance of Union Station. Daniel Burnham's drawings of the plaza reveal that the bowl fountain at the east was on axis with the First Street and the bowl fountain at the west of the plaza was on axis with E Street and Louisiana Avenue (then an un-named future street). Once in place, Lorado Taft's figures of Columbus and Discovery were on axis with the Capitol and the entrance to Union Station.

Historic views from the plaza included the Capitol to the south. Following the completion of the plaza and station, the southern view also included lots that were largely empty. Photos reveal that adjacent lots to the northeast of the station were mostly vacant as well. Some commercial buildings and residences occupied the squares between 1st Street, NE and the future Louisiana Avenue, but much of this land initially was bare. A baseball field and track existed to the southeast of the plaza until sometime in the 1920s. Most likely it was removed at the time of the extension of the Capitol grounds. To the northwest of the plaza, the U. S. Post Office, also designed by Daniel Burnham, was completed in 1914 (now the Smithsonian National Postal Museum). Additional buildings were constructed on lots along North Capitol Street between Massachusetts and D Street, but further research is necessary to determine if their construction fell within the period of significance. Union Station to the north, like the Capitol, provided a striking view from the plaza.

Historic photos reveal that the plaza was visible upon approaching the station from the surrounding streets and across the empty lots bordering the plaza. This is particularly clear in a circa 1910 photograph taken from Delaware Avenue prior to the installation of the three flagpoles and Columbus fountain (see "Looking down trolley tracks toward Union Station, Washington, D.C." ca. 1910, Library of Congress). Pedestrians leaving Union Station would have a view of the plaza and the Columbus fountain upon exiting through the grand archways at the main entranceway to the station. Historic views within the plaza also included all the sculptural and architectural elements throughout the plaza.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Although the surrounding landscape has changed considerably since the period of significance, the most prominent historic view to the U.S. Capitol down Delaware Avenue remains evident for pedestrians exiting the main entrance of Union Station and for people visiting the plaza. This view is partially blocked by street tree canopies along the Delaware Avenue alignment. Other street trees frame views down the roads radiating off the plaza. There is a clear view to the northwest of Burnham's 1914 U.S. Post Office building. With the enlargement of the Capitol grounds in the 1930s, Delaware Avenue was widened and

Louisiana Avenue was added between E Street and Delaware Avenue, further altering the view from the period of significance. One of the intentions of constructing Louisiana Avenue was to connect the station and plaza to The Mall visually and physically. Though it wasn't constructed until the 1930s, a street was planned at the site of Louisiana Avenue when Columbus Plaza was designed. The visual connection between Columbus Plaza and the Mall is largely lost by the full canopy growth of the street trees, and the presence of cars parked in the middle of Louisiana Avenue. Tree canopy growth has also altered the view from Columbus Plaza to the Capitol grounds so that any views of the reflecting pool and other features are not perceptible, but the green space between Delaware and Louisiana avenues is visible.

Current views from the plaza include the bicentennial flags along the outer edge of the sidewalk on the outside perimeter of Massachusetts Avenue as it runs around the plaza. The presence of the flags, with their colors and their role representing the states and territories, adds to the purpose of the plaza and the Capitol grounds as a gateway, but they are considered non-contributing, though complimentary. Unfortunately, the stark whiteness of the flagpoles contributes to the visual clutter that exists in the surrounding area. This clutter is due largely to the great number of cars parked on the surrounding streets and lots. Surface parking lots between E Street, Louisiana and Massachusetts Avenues, and between 1st Street and Massachusetts Avenue to the east, are visible from the plaza, as are commercial and office buildings on North Capitol Street and Massachusetts Avenue. The 1992 Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building is a more recent addition to the northeast of the plaza. The building has a carefully maintained tree-filled lawn bordering Massachusetts Avenue that is visible from the plaza.

The introduction of the Freedom Bell in 1981 altered the historic view of Columbus Fountain from Union Station. Prior to its placement, pedestrians and vehicles to the north of the plaza had a clear view of the fountain. At the station's main entrance, the Capitol, and the fountain are all on axis. The bell was added to the axis and it, with the fountain behind it, is now one of the first features of the plaza one sees when approaching the plaza from the station. The Freedom Bell also altered the historic views within the plaza. Its inclusion added another sculptural element to the plaza's program.

Views of the plaza from vehicles traveling past are similar to those of the period of significance, except for the inclusion of the hedges planted on one of the traffic islands. The hedges are about the height of, or higher than, the sight line from an average sedan, so clear views for passengers traveling past are difficult.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Views to the U.S. Capitol

Feature Identification Number: 129891

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Internal Views Within the Plaza

Feature Identification Number: 129901

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Views to Daniel Burnham's Post Office

Feature Identification Number: 129903

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Views down Mass. Avenue to Stanton Park

Feature Identification Number: 129905

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Views to the plaza from area streets

Feature Identification Number: 129909

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Views to the state and territory flags

Feature Identification Number: 129911

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Views to surrounding parking lots

Feature Identification Number: 129913

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Views to Union Station

Feature Identification Number: 129915

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Views to surrounding buildings

Feature Identification Number: 129919

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Views from Union Station to Freedom Bell

Feature Identification Number: 129925

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Circulation

VEHICULAR

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

At the time of its planning and construction, Columbus Plaza was bounded by Massachusetts

and Delaware avenues, and E and 1st streets, NE. Louisiana Avenue, between Delaware Avenue and E Street, was constructed in 1930 during the improvement and enlargement of the Capitol Grounds.

Vehicular traffic controls were included in the original design of the plaza. The balustrade walls outside the carriage entrances at the east and west ends of the station served to separate traffic into two lanes—one that ran along the station and the other along the northern border of the plaza. Early photographs suggest that this area had two-way traffic. Street cars appear to be traveling both east and west. Daniel Burnham's design also planned for the movement of traffic around the plaza to the surrounding streets. The original design included eight circular and elliptical islands (see Shaffer: 111). Traffic islands were first built around the plaza prior to the installation of the fountain. An undated photograph reveals a bare plaza surrounded by the eight elliptical and circular islands. (Historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164-D9-72211_DATE) The islands had curbs, perimeter sidewalks, and streetlights, and were planted with grass. These islands divided the plaza into two rings. The inner ring bordered the southern edge of the pedestrian section of the plaza and permitted the passage of cars and wagons and other small vehicles. The outer ring was used by streetcars traveling up the surrounding streets towards the station. Delaware Avenue was a streetcar route until the early 1930s when tracks were removed and installed on 1st Street NE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Current traffic patterns are similar to the period of significance, but today a wider variety of vehicles make use of the plaza. Numerous bus lines serving commuters and tourists have stops on the re-circulating lane between the plaza and Massachusetts Avenue. Passenger cars, taxis, buses, D.C. "Ducks," and other vehicles crowd the two traffic lanes and two waiting lanes passing between the plaza and station. A cabline picks up passengers in front of the station and waiting taxis cue up along the station's east side. Massachusetts Avenue is the major thruway at the plaza and east-bound traffic circulates via the middle, or northern ring of the plaza; west-bound traffic uses the southern outer ring. Historic photographs show a similar traffic pattern with streetcars circulating on the southern ring of the plaza towards the station.

PEDESTRIAN

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

In Daniel Burnham's original plan, and in the plaza's earliest configuration, Columbus Plaza was a wide open space free of paths. The shallow steps between the upper and lower sections of the plaza were the only features that served to move or guide pedestrians from one area to another. With the 1914 introduction of the lawn panels and brick paving, laid in a herringbone pattern, pathways were created. On the upper level of the plaza, lawn panels flanked both bowl fountains. These panels were bordered by the stairs to the lower terrace and the three flagpoles. The lawn panels did not surround the flagpoles, but dipped inward in a semicircular formation towards the fountains to allow for a pathway. The third panel was a curved rectilinear shape at the rear of the Columbus Fountain. The lawn panels on the upper plaza corresponded with the four lower panels and were laid out on close axis with the surrounding streets and crosswalks. At the Columbus Fountain, the borders of the lawn panels complemented the circular bowl of the lower basin of the fountain. The panels were rectilinear

with a modified crescent cutout near the fountain to allow for pedestrians to pass through.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The herringbone pattern and configuration of the brick paving remains the same as when it was installed in 1914. Most of the paving is probably original, since there is no evidence the plaza has been replaced. The only known alteration is the installation of the Freedom Bell in 1981, directly north, or behind the Columbus Fountain. To allow this addition, the center of a rose panel was removed and new brick, matching the existing brick in color and size, was laid in concentric rings beneath and around the bell. Other changes occurred to the end wings of the main median, and several of the traffic islands, which are paved with concrete, Belgian block or both. In 2007 bricks were removed and put back in place during work to stabilize the plaza following the discovery of a water main break.

Passengers going to and from the train station bring a heavy concentration of foot traffic to the northwest side of the plaza. Crosswalks and traffic lights are located at the major intersections. The crosswalk at Delaware Avenue is one of the most frequented crossings and many people travel across the plaza from the main entrance of Union Station or along the outer western edge of the plaza from the Metro entrance to reach this intersection. Crosswalks are absent, so there is some pedestrian confusion at the northwest section of the plaza between the rostral column balustrades and the upper level of the plaza.

Extensive social trails are present on the area of lawn planted on the long, linear traffic island separating the inner re-circulating road from Massachusetts Avenue. The lawn is backed by the pyracantha hedge to the north.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Columbus Plaza itself

Feature Identification Number: 129841

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Brick walk

Feature Identification Number: 129845

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46763

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Pathway - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410010

Feature: Lawn Panels

Feature Identification Number: 129847

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Traffic Islands

Feature Identification Number: 129849

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Social Trails

Feature Identification Number: 129851

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Extensive worn lawn and compacted soil evident on the west side of the median (NCR CLP 2008).



Brick walkways with worn, missing, or damaged bricks (NCR CLP 2008).

Constructed Water Features

COLUMBUS FOUNTAIN HISTORIC CONDITION

The Columbus Fountain is a component of a symmetrical architectural composition extending across the entire south front of the plaza; it supports an idealized figure of Columbus and allegorical sculptures. Artist Lorado Taft designed the figures and other sculptural features. Seen on axis in front of Union Station, the marble fountain complements the composition. The central structure is a forty-five-foot-tall pier, which serves as a background for the Columbus statue. From this pier, a two-tier semicircular fountain projects at the front; plinths, or pedestals, supporting sculptures project to either side; and parapet walls extend to the rear. The pier, articulated with severe, simple classical moldings, has projecting panels at the front and rear and recessed panels on the sides. Surmounting the pier is a large globe on which the continents are depicted, with the Atlantic Ocean facing the front. Eagles with spread wings stand at each corner and are linked by heavy garlands.

Columbus's ship, the Santa Maria, is represented by a large projecting scrolled prow in the upper fountain basin that bears a winged female allegorical figurehead, symbolizing Discovery, depicted with head raised, eyes closed, hands raised to her chest, and windblown draperies. Standing on the prow is a fifteen-foot-high figure of Columbus with his hands crossed over his chest. Columbus gazes resolutely south towards the Capitol. Lorado Taft wrote: "This figure, wrapped in its mediaeval mantle, stands in a quiet pose with folded arms and steady gaze, expressive of the confidence of the great spirit within." The artist wished to give it something of the simplicity of Egyptian sculptures with their suggestion of calm and permanency. ("The Columbus Memorial Fountain," undated memo, NAMA CR file Desc/Res)

On plinths at either side of the pier are kneeling male figures. On the east, or right, a mature bearded man representing the Old World drapes his arms over a shield, grasping a crumpled map. On the west, or left, a young Native American symbolizing the New World reaches over his shoulder towards his quiver (Burnham & Co to Eliot, 3/20/11 NAMA CR file). The plinths extend into low walls that form the rear of the fountain; set into these walls are four

waterspouts. When in operation, water cascades over the lip of the upper basin to the lower one. The walls terminate in a last pair of plinths which form the end walls of the fountain basins and support two identical figures of lions en couchant.

Projecting from the rear of the pedestals supporting the lions are two short parapet walls which create a U-shaped enclosure behind the memorial. A bench which is integral to the monument runs around the entire area.

Near the top of the rear, or north, face of the pier is a medallion, surrounded by a swag, depicting Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in profile. Below, a gilded inscription reads: "To/The Memory Of/Christopher Columbus/Whose High Faith/And/Indomitable Courage/Gave To Mankind/A New World/Born MCDXXXVI/Died MDIV" (the birth date was incorrect by ten years). At the base of the pier (and to the sides) is a stone seat. Another inscription is found on the rear pier of Columbus Fountain. It reads, "In keeping with the goals of Columbianism, the first attribute of Columbus mentioned is faith."

The memorial was carved by the Piccirilli Brothers of white Cherokee marble from Georgia. A 1987 report by Environmental Management Consultants, Inc. lists the following dimensions for the memorial: the shaft is forty-two feet and six inches high, and eleven feet four inches square at the top; while the statue of Columbus is fifteen feet and eight inches high. East to west the monument is sixty-seven feet wide, and north to south it is sixty-four feet and six inches. However the document fails to state what points it is measuring between. (Environmental Management Consultants, Inc. "Investigative Report of the Memorial Fountain: Christopher Columbus Memorial Fountain." 1987; electronic file name was "Columb8A, and file date was Feb. 10, 1989.) An NPS document of 1991 states the memorial is sixty-six feet wide and forty-four feet deep; again, the reference points are not given. (NPS NCR. Columbus fact sheet, dated 10/20/91:3, NAMA CR file Desc/Res) The memorial rests on a foundation of reinforced concrete girders and slabs, with concrete piles extending thirty-four to forty-five feet into the ground – to bedrock.

EXISTING CONDITION

The fountain is not currently in operation due to deteriorated and failing piping. Water and some trash have collected in the upper basin. Stains and discoloration are the most noticeable signs of deterioration on the interior and exterior of the basins. There is also a grey tint to several parts of the memorial, but it is most apparent on the globe and the pier supporting it. In addition, the marble and sculptures are cracked, sugaring, and dirty, and the mortar is in need of re-pointing. (Catherine Dewey, architectural conservator, telephone conversation with author, 18 April 2008.)

BOWL FOUNTAINS

HISTORIC CONDITION

Two identical fountains, designed by Daniel Burnham, are centered in each of the walled precincts located at the east and west ends of Columbus Plaza. The unornamented fountains are composed of broad, simple forms articulated with simple moldings, forming in profile a gentle series of curves and reverse curves. Made of green granite from Rockport, Maine, each

fountain rests on a three-step platform (a “crepidoma”). The fountains are composed of a broad goblet-shaped fountain bowl set within a large circular basin. A single jet of water rises from the center of the bowl; the water fills the bowl and flows over the sides into the lower basin. The upper bowls are 13 feet in diameter and the lower basins are 22.5 feet in diameter. (LCS)

The locations of the two fountains were determined by axial alignments with surrounding streets. The western fountain is set on axis with Louisiana Avenue and the eastern fountain is set on axis with 1st Street, NE.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The fountains are not currently in operation due to deteriorated and failing piping. Trash and water has collected in the large lower basins. The base for the western goblet is chipped and both fountain bases are stained. The basin floors of both fountains are discolored and cracked/damaged.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Columbus Fountain

Feature Identification Number: 129839

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46762

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Fountain - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410001

Feature: Granite Bowl Fountain (East)

Feature Identification Number: 129843

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46760

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Granite Bowl (East) - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410003

Feature: Granite Bowl Fountain (West)

Feature Identification Number: 130303

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46870

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Granite Bowl (West) - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410004

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Left, Columbus Fountain upper and lower basins showing collection of debris and pooling water; Right, discoloration of granite (NCR CLP 2008).



Granite bowl fountains with debris and pooling water in the lower bowls. Also shows the discoloration and staining of the bases supporting the goblets (NCR CLP 2008).

Vegetation

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Daniel Burnham's drawings for Columbus Plaza did not include any plantings, but he did discuss his desire to eventually include some evergreen trees in a 1903 interview. "We have not yet decided what tree we will plant around this semi-circular space, but, if possible, it will be an evergreen whose full growth is a height of about forty feet. The belt of dark green thus formed against the walls of the building will be most effective. If we cannot find an evergreen suitable, we shall select a tree whose branches, when the leaves have fallen, will cluster closely together so as still to form the dark belt desired. The trees will be planted in a double row." ("Next to Capitol in Size," WP 11/8/03:2) There is no evidence this plan was ever put into effect.

Following the plaza's construction and the dedication of the fountain in 1912, the plaza was free of any vegetation. In 1914 three lawn panels were installed on the upper section of the plaza and four on the lower section when the brick plaza, and walkways were constructed. In early photographs, prior to the installation of the fountain, the traffic islands surrounding the plaza appear to be planted with turf grass as well. (Historic photo, MRCE, UNST

G1-F23-10164-D9-72211_DATE_)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are four planting panels on the upper plaza and four on the lower plaza. Originally the upper plaza had only three lawn panels, but the center panel was divided into two separate planting areas with the Freedom Bell installation in 1981. The upper plaza panels contain lawn and rose beds. Lawn also surrounds the fountains at the far western and eastern sections of the plaza and roses fill the panels framing the flagpoles and the Freedom Bell. Lawn, barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* Atropurpurea) and seasonal flowers, currently *Ageratum*, are planted on the inside borders. The roses, shrubs, and seasonal plants were introduced to the lawn panels beginning in the 1960s during Lady Bird Johnson's Washington beautification program, altering the original simple design.

On the kidney-shaped traffic island to the west, a mixture of yew (*Taxus* sp.) and liriopie are found. A solitary American holly (*Ilex opaca*) grows in each of the traffic islands at the extreme east and west ends of the lines of islands. Single flowering (*Meidiland* Carefree Delight) roses surround the trees. Four-and-half-foot tall *pyracantha* hedges and lawn fill sections of the large median separating the re-circulating lane from traffic traveling around the plaza.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Four Lawn Panels on the lower plaza

Feature Identification Number: 129927

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Lawn Panels surrounding bowl fountains

Feature Identification Number: 129929

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: *Pyracantha* hedge planted on median

Feature Identification Number: 129931

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Yew and Liriopie in traffic island

Feature Identification Number: 129933

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: American hollies on traffic island

Feature Identification Number: 129935

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

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Feature: All roses throughout the plaza

Feature Identification Number: 129939

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Lawn panels adjacent to Freedom Bell

Feature Identification Number: 129941

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Left, upper plaza lawn panel and roses to the west of Columbus Fountain; Right, lower west side of plaza lawn panel with ageratum and barberry (NCR CLP 2008).



Single flowering pink roses and American holly (Ilex opaca) trees on far eastern and western traffic islands (NCR CLP 2008).

Buildings and Structures

The architectural features of Columbus Plaza define the spatial boundaries of the plaza, relate the plaza to the station, and provide support for sculptural embellishment that articulates the symbolic program. The plaza was envisioned as an extension of the station itself—as a further element of the grand entranceway to the Capitol. Common ornamental features include globes, eagles with spread wings or “spreadeagles,” and garlands. The architectural ornamentation tends to be simple, while more ornate ornamentation is found on the highly sculptural metal features of the rostral columns, lightposts, and flagpole bases. (For additional information on the lightposts and flagpoles see Small Scale Features; see Adjacent Lands for the rostral columns; and see Constructed Water Features for Columbus fountain and the bowl fountains.)

STAIRS AND BALUSTRADED WALLS (contributing)

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Stairs and balustraded walls were part of Daniel Burnham’s design for the plaza. Historic pictures reveal their presence prior to the installation of Lorado Taft’s Columbus memorial. Five low, curved, granite steps on each side of the Columbus Fountain link the fountain with granite balustraded walls. The walls form precincts at the east and west ends of the plaza, with a square section extending towards the south, changing into a semicircular/semi-elliptical curved wall around the large green granite bowl fountains. The white granite used for the balustrades and stairs came from Bethel, Vermont; it is the same stone used on the exterior of

Union Station.

The balustrades are set on low parapet walls. Each wall has a center plinth and pedestals at the corners. Forming part of the architectural framework designed by Burnham & Co. for the plaza, the unornamented balustraded walls are similar in their severity to the architectural features of the Columbus Fountains.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

There is some graffiti on the wall surrounding the eastern fountain and the granite is chipped in places and discolored, but overall the balustraded walls are in good condition.

AMERICAN LEGION FREEDOM BELL AND ARMATURE (non-contributing)

The American Legion Freedom Bell, installed in 1981 just north of the Columbus Fountain, is a replica of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell that is about twice the size of the original. The bell is about seven feet high by seven feet wide and roughly 16,000 pounds.

The support, a double post-and-beam steel structure standing eleven feet high that suspends the bell from a yoke to a height of nineteen inches above the plaza. (On design of yoke, see CFA minutes Jan. 19, 1978) Set within the paving beneath the front, or north, edge of the bell is a bronze dedicatory plaque bearing the following inscription in capital letters: "The Freedom Bell/Dedicated to/the spirit of the Bicentennial/on behalf of/the children of our nation/given by/the American Legion/and/American Legion Auxiliary/1981."

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Balustrade Walls and Stairs

Feature Identification Number: 129885

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Freedom Bell

Feature Identification Number: 129887

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46757

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Freedom Bell - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410002

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Graffiti on balustrade wall, east side of plaza (NCR CLP 2008).



American Legion Freedom Bell, installed in 1981 (NCR CLP 2008).

Small Scale Features

HISTORIC CONDITION

THREE FLAGPOLES (contributing)

The north side of the plaza is defined by three identical, highly elaborate flagpoles to display the American flag twenty-four hours a day, set in a line slightly south of the line formed by the rostral column balustrades (see Adjacent Lands for description of the rostral columns). Daniel Burnham's design for the three flagpoles was inspired by the three flagpoles outside the Cathedral di San Marco on the Piazza di San Marco in Venice. Each flagpole is centered on one of the three grand archways of Union Station. The central flagpole is thus aligned also with the Columbus Fountain.

Each flagpole is composed of granite steps, cast-iron/bronze base, steel shaft, and bronze/cast-iron finial. Standing on a series of three octagonal granite steps ("crepidoma") are the richly embellished bronze bases, also octagonal in plan. The bases rise in several tiers, generally in a succession of convex bands of molding and concave panels. Moldings include egg-and-dart and Greek key designs. A garland of leaves circles the bottom of the first level. The main tier is bell-shaped with concave sides or faces. In front of alternating faces, four spreadeagles with upraised wings stand on heavy garlands composed of fruit and leaves bound with ribbons. Circling the top of this tier is a horizontal band that, at the top of each face, encompasses a plain medallion surrounded by a garland. Most likely the three flagpole bases were cast by the Chicago Ornamental Iron Company, of Chicago. (Hoover to Wadase, 12/2/92, NAMA CR file, State Flags)

The crowning element of the bell-shaped level is a cornice band of complex Greek key molding. Above this rises a domical section which supports the ribbed cup and high collar in which the butt of the flagpole rests. A short distance above the base are cast-iron/bronze bands circling the poles which incorporate cleats to hold the flag rope or halyard.

The poles are terminated by bronze/cast-iron finials in the shape of orbs supported on small Corinthian capitals and surmounted by gilded spreadeagles. These repeat the motif of the crowning globe on the tall plinth of the Columbus Fountain. Like the balustrades with the rostral columns, these elements are rendered in an opulent French Beaux-Arts manner, influenced by the French Baroque.

EXISTING CONDITION

The 112-feet-high white-painted steel poles were installed in 1965, replacing the original 110-feet-high cast-iron poles which had been removed in 1962. The bases of the flagpoles are in very good condition. The three octagonal granite steps ("crepidoma") that serve as a support for the flagpole base suffer from discoloration and rust staining.

TWIN-TWENTY LIGHTPOSTS (non-contributing)

By 1934 four Twin-Twenty lightposts, that are still present, replaced the first lightpost used on the north side of Columbus Plaza which had the form of a classical column, supporting a spherical lamp that was bound vertically and horizontally with metal bands and surmounted by

a finial (historic photo, MRCE, UNST G1-F23-10164_DATE_) Around 1975, the Twin-Twenty lampposts replaced all previous fixtures at the plaza and on its surrounding islands. (Union Station Plaza Treatment and Channelization, Executive Director's Recommendation, May 29, 1975 (NCPC file no. 1325): 1.) The Twin-Twenties are stylized classical columns with Doric fluting (the intersection between the channels is flat, not sharp). The posts support a pair of the typical Washington Globe lamps, which are shaped like classical urns. All lamps are made of Lexan, a thermoplastic resin which resists shattering but yellows with age and exposure. The base of the post, or column, is articulated with a series of moldings and a row of acanthus leaves. The capital of the post, inspired by the capital of the Ionic order, has two volutes supporting a horizontal member in the form of an entablature. This member and the volutes support two torch-shaped lamp bases with moldings and varied profiles. The volutes are ornamented with leaves. The finials at the top of the poles and the pendants at the bottom of the torches are in the form of acorns or buds.

WASHINGTON STANDARD (non-contributing)

Two single-globe light posts, one to the west of the fountain and the other to the east, provide illumination at night for the Columbus fountain. Three spot lights are mounted on the side of the column.

TRASH RECEPTACLES (non-contributing)

The trash receptacles used at Columbus Plaza are the "tulip" type, with vertical wood slats connected by steel bands containing a removable plastic trash can liner and supported on a single steel post. Located near the lawn panels and rose beds on the upper plaza and in areas of heavy foot traffic, including the traffic islands to the west of the plaza near the entrance to the Metro. Most are in satisfactory condition.

STATE AND TERRITORY FLAGPOLES (non-contributing)

In honor of the Bicentennial, Congress passed Public Law 94-320, on June 25, 1976, which directed the Secretary of the Interior to erect a flagpole for each state and territory, fifty-five in all, on the U.S. Capitol grounds, adjacent to the sidewalks on the outside edge of Massachusetts Avenue and across from Columbus Plaza. The flags are arranged from west to east in the order of states' admission to the Union. A flagpole representing the District of Columbia was added in 2002, bringing the total to fifty-six. Though the flagpoles were installed after the period of significance, they are compatible with the plaza and the overall purpose of the area as a gateway to the Capitol. The park maintains the flags and poles, but they are located on land managed by the Architect of the Capitol.

The tapered aluminum alloy flagpoles have a white epoxy finish. The six-inch diameter poles are surmounted by gilded copper ball finials, about eight inches in diameter. Each flagpole has a ten-inch diameter bronze plaque identifying the place it represents. (To check: where are the plaques located?) ("Columbus Plaza Flag Plan," NAMA CR files Desc/Res; Lori McConnell [CR mgr NAMA] to Steve Lorenzetti [Assistant Superintendent NAMA]. Memo, re: Columbus Plaza State Flags. March 13, 2002.)

PARKING METERS (non-contributing)

A single automated/computerized parking meter is located at the western edge of the plaza on the traffic island adjacent to the re-circulating road.

NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE BOXES (non-contributing)

To the northwest of the plaza adjacent to the rostral columns are several vending boxes for national and local newspapers and magazines.

VENTILATION GRATES AND MANHOLE COVERS (non-contributing)

Metal and concrete ventilation grates and manhole covers are set within the brick paving in the northern section of the plaza and near the western bowl fountain.

SIGNAGE (non-contributing)

Directional signs and regulatory signs are located throughout the plaza. A “please clean-up after pets sign”, for example, is located at the border of the lawn panel and the rose plantings adjacent to the western bowl fountain.

UTILITY BOX(ES) (non-contributing)

A utility box is located just off the main vista axis, southwest of Columbus Fountain and near the Delaware Avenue crosswalk.

BUS SHELTER (non-contributing)

A single bus shelter is located at the western edge of the plaza on the traffic island adjacent to the re-circulating road.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Trash Receptacles

Feature Identification Number: 129859

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Twin Twenty Lightposts

Feature Identification Number: 129861

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: State and Territory Flagpoles

Feature Identification Number: 129863

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Parking Meters

Feature Identification Number: 129865

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Signage

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Feature Identification Number: 129867

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Ventilation Grates and Manhole Covers

Feature Identification Number: 129875

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Bus Shelter

Feature Identification Number: 129877

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Utility Boxes

Feature Identification Number: 129883

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Newspaper and Magazine Sales Boxes

Feature Identification Number: 129947

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Washington Standard Light Post

Feature Identification Number: 129949

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46758

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Wash. Light Std. (12) - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410008

Feature: Three Flagpoles

Feature Identification Number: 129853

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 46761

LCS Structure Name: Columbus Plaza - Flagpoles - Res. 334

LCS Structure Number: 33410006

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Left, three flagpoles to the north of Columbus Fountain; Right, detail of flagpole base (NCR CLP 2008).

Land Use

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Columbus Plaza was designed to act as a grand entranceway for travelers arriving in Washington via Union Station. For many it provided their first view of the city and the U.S. Capitol. Columbus Plaza was also intended to act as a space for large crowds to gather to welcome important visitors to Washington and to celebrate public events. With the dedication of the Columbus Fountain, the plaza also became a site to memorialize the explorer, Christopher Columbus.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently, thousands of tourists and commuters pass through Columbus Plaza every day as they travel between trains, buses, taxis, cars, and Metro, or walking from Union Station to nearby office buildings, hotels, residential neighborhoods, the U.S. Capitol, and congressional buildings. It is one of the busiest public spaces in the city.

For most people, the plaza is a place to pass through, rather than a destination in itself. The lack of benches, except for those built into the rear of Columbus Fountain, discourages lingering, though indigent people spend time sitting at the fountains and throughout the plaza. In addition, the plaza lacks adequate shade. During the summer months, the heat and bright sunlight discourage pedestrians from remaining. During rush hour, the heavy press of pedestrian traffic discourages leisurely viewing, but when less crowded, people pause to take pictures and examine the Freedom Bell, Columbus Fountain, Union Station and the Capitol. Every October the Knights of Columbus continue to commemorate Christopher Columbus on Columbus Day.

Topography

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

Grading and filling for construction of Union Station greatly altered the elevation in this area. Prior to the station's construction, the site was twenty feet above mean tide and sloped down and to the southwest, with a rise to the east. Massachusetts and Delaware avenues were laid nearly thirty feet lower than C Street, which meant that the creation of the plaza required 750,000 cubic yards of fill to make the streets level. (Tracerics: 2-3; Wright: 86) Daniel Burnham's design included two different levels, to meet the various grades of the surrounding landscape. In his plan, the northern, upper section of plaza was on a grade with the front entrance to Union Station, while the southern, lower section stepped down approximately three feet to meet the adjacent street grade. Shallow granite steps led from one level of the plaza to the other, as they still do today.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Columbus Plaza retains the topographic characteristics of the historic period.

Condition

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair
Assessment Date: 09/22/2008

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The current condition of Columbus Plaza is assessed as fair. In order to achieve an assessment of good conditions, the following measures are suggested to address the areas that need improvement:

1. Continue efforts to repair and stabilize the piping and plumbing in order to return the fountains to working condition.
2. Repair brick paving that is worn or damaged.
3. Repair/restore granite on the fountains and balustrades where it is discolored or damaged due to weather, pollution, vandalism, or other causes.
4. Non-functioning or damaged light fixtures need to be repaired or replaced.
5. Social trails have worn the vegetation on the western border of the plaza. The proposed alteration of the traffic lanes surrounding the plaza and the additional pedestrian areas that will result from this project may correct the issue, but, if not, the area is in need of restoration. The park currently maintains the appearance and condition of the plaza. Routine maintenance in the form of trash and weed removal keeps the plaza in good shape. It is recommended that the park continue to perform these functions, particularly as it relates to the care of vegetation in order to control weeds.

The Assessment Date refers to the date that the park superintendent concurred with this Condition Assessment.

Impacts

Type of Impact:	Deferred Maintenance
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Sections of the brick walkways are damaged, uneven, or bricks are missing.
Type of Impact:	Impending Development
External or Internal:	External
Impact Description:	The planned elimination of the re-circulating road between the pedestrian plaza and the outer median along with the creation of a larger pedestrian plaza attached to the historic plaza will alter the park's appearance.
Type of Impact:	Soil Compaction

External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	The high volume of pedestrian traffic through the plaza creates extensive social trails that leave the western outer section of the plaza free of vegetation.
Type of Impact:	Vandalism/Theft/Arson
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Graffiti can be found on the balustrades surrounding the eastern bowl fountain and supporting the rostral column outside the western carriage entrance.
Type of Impact:	Exposure To Elements
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Evidence of the effects of weather and pollution are apparent on the Columbus fountain. The granite is discolored and stained.
Type of Impact:	Adjacent Lands
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Tourists, local residents, and commuters, traveling to and from Union Station, the adjacent office buildings, and other areas of interest attract a great number of people to Columbus Plaza.
Type of Impact:	Improper Drainage
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	The fountains have been turned off, but water pools and stands in the fountain basins.

Treatment

Bibliography and Supplemental Information

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Citation Publisher:	HABS/NPS
Citation Type:	
Citation Location:	HABS No. DC-694
Citation Author:	Belanger, Dian Olson
Citation Title:	The Railroad in the Park: Washington's Baltimore & Potomac Station, 1872-1907
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